JULY 2, 1935 10c

# New Masses

# Short Story Number

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## FACTS about the

# SOVIET UNION

### —of special significance to the Foresighted Investor

THE economic record of the Soviet Union includes a series of accomplishments unparalleled in the history of modern nations. Moreover, the country is showing steady and rapid progress, carrying out its program of planned security for the country's 170 million people:—

1. The Soviet Union has more than doubled its industrial production in the past five years, surpassing the other leading powers of the world in rate of growth. It now stands second only to the United States in volume of industrial output.

2. The extensive commercial credits involved in more than $4.5 billions worth of foreign purchases have been paid off dollar for dollar, as due, without resorting to delays of any kind.

3. Intensive development of the nation's gold resources has enabled the Soviet Union to become the second largest producer of gold in the world. Gold production in 1934 amounted to approximately $147 millions.

4. Wage-earners have increased in number from 11 millions in 1928 to 23 millions in 1934, doubling in six years and effecting the total elimination of unemployment. Annual wages have increased in the same period from 8 billion to 42 billion roubles.

5. Coincident with the striking increases in the agricultural and industrial production of the country, the national income has grown from 29 billion roubles in 1929 to 55 billion in 1934, an increase of nearly 90%.

6. During the past two years the balance of foreign trade has been highly favorable to the Soviet Union, the excess of exports in 1933 amounting to 147 million gold roubles and in 1934 to 186 million. Through planned control of foreign trade the nation has been able to successfully carry out its settled policy of undertaking no obligations without making definite provision for their repayment on the dates due.

*The same careful planning that has promoted and governed this extraordinary growth has been applied to*

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## Soviet American Securities Corp.

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New Masses

JULY 2, 1935

## *Roosevelt "Soaks" the Rich*

SMALL wonder that Huey Long, upon hearing Roosevelt's message on taxation, jumped up from his seat, arms akimbo, shouted "Amen! He's taken the words right out of my mouth," and turned a delirious waltz upon the Senate floor. It was the spontaneous tribute of one skilled demagogue to an acknowledged master. What really lies behind this much-discussed message, hysterically hailed by the ultra-liberal New York Post in a front page editorial (entitled "Take Heart, America!") as "a ringing answer to . . . radicals who say that capitalism cannot be made to work," delivered by "the man in the White House who can lead us out of our tribulations"? Ostensibly, the message called for more steeply graduated taxation on the higher brackets of inheritance, gift, personal and corporation incomes. It was delivered in a manner quite in keeping with the familiar Roosevelt strategy of making every pronouncement of policy, no matter how trivial, innocuous or reactionary, sound like the harbinger of a new dawn, a revolutionary step forward to a new social order. Why does Roosevelt with his present term approaching its end, choose precisely this moment to deliver his "revolutionary tax proposal," highly flavored with radical-sounding phrases such as "wider distribution of wealth," "unjust concentration of wealth and economic power," and revenue laws that "operate in many ways to the unfair advantage of the few?" Quite obviously, the message is pointed directly towards the 1936 election campaign, with the President trying to play on the prevailing mass resentment against the rich. But an even more significant note, we think, is struck in the passage forming the principal key to the tax proposal: "Social unrest and a deepening sense of unfairness are dangers to our national life which we must minimize by rigorous methods." True words, these, when properly interpreted.

THE LAST LESSON

*Redfield*

ROOSEVELT'S taxation message had a two-fold purpose: (1) to convert mass discontent and resentment into personal profit, with an eye to 1936; and (2) to carry out his duty, as the agent of the ruling class, of maintaining the fiction that the government is "an impartial third party," which is quite willing to soak the rich as well as the poor. So much for the sound of the President's message. Now for its substance, if any. Whom does the President propose to tax, and how much? Does he propose laying higher taxes on *all* wealthy persons, estates and corporations? Not at all, as is evident by the cautious repetition of the phrases, *"vast* inheritances," *"great* accumulations of wealth," *"very great* individual net income," etc. And by implicit definition, Roosevelt means by such terms only estates of $10,000,000 and over, and personal incomes of more than $1,000,000 annually. Obviously, not many fortunes will be touched by this plan. How much will the proposed taxes amount to? The President is artfully nebulous on this important point. We may read the message from beginning to end without meeting with one concrete proposal. One fails to see even a suggestion of "large" taxes on the "very large, vast" inheritances, gifts, etc. On the contrary, it is specifically stated that taxes must not be levied so as "to discourage enterprise," which a New York Times editorial correctly rates as "sound conservatism," and The Baltimore Sun as a sentiment to which even Calvin Coolidge could say, Amen.

THE most optimistic estimate of the amount that could be collected through the President's proposal runs only as high as one billion dollars—hardly one-tenth of the present total tax revenue in the country. The highly touted graduated inheritance tax, even if it came to thrice the present sum derived from such taxes—would amount to only $300 million annually, a dew-drop in a sea as far as the needs of the masses are concerned. At that, past experience has proved that multi-millionaires find it ridiculously easy to dodge any and all taxes with the aid of the weasels at the top of the barrister fraternity. Be it noted, too, that no mention is made of raising corpora

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tion taxes: there is only a suggestion that these taxes be "equalized" in favor of the "smaller" corporations, whatever these might be. Assuming that even the drop in the bucket proposed by Roosevelt can be extracted from the plutocrats, would it really be distributed on a "share-the-wealth" basis as the delusion-loving liberals and their organs such as The Post, claim? Far from it. For Mr. Roosevelt, in the hidden corners of his message, specifically states that the taxes, when and if collected, will be applied to "paying the national debt" and "balancing the budget." In plainer words, he proposes more tight-drawn belts for the mass of workers.

### *The Mitchell Investigation*

THE charges against the Department of Commerce brought by Ewing Y. Mitchell, ousted assistant secretary, serve to reveal Mr. Roper's passion for bundling with some of our ablest business leaders. It is no secret that the department (brought to its present perfection by Mr. Hoover) exists solely to siphon subsidies in actual cash to shipping lines and subsidies in the form of services and publicity work to air lines and other forms of corporate life. Mr. Mitchell was fed up and said so. Senator Copeland immediately rushed to Roper's rescue with an "investigation" by his Senate Commerce Committee. (The Senator, old-time patent-medicine testi-anizer, is well acquainted with the problems of commerce.) Lest the alacrity with which the government that bestows a $19-a-month wage on relief labor gives subsidies to shipping lines be too openly revealed, Mr. Copeland browbeat Mitchell for three days, reduced him to a grinning, helpless hulk, and called the investigation off. But a few crumbs of truth escaped. The government paid the International Mercantile Marine (Vincent Astor's company) $3,000,000 as a subsidy to run the Leviathan, which we stole from Germany, for five years. After three years the government consented to leave the Leviathan tied up, but made no move to recapture $1,720,000 in subsidies that remained with I. M. M. Mr. Roper, questioned on the point, became incoherent and stammered that the Leviathan was a firetrap. Senator Copeland, just a few weeks before, had heard testimony from overworked U. S. steamship inspection officials that 160 American ships are actually firetraps, but are permitted to sail. It did not occur to Copeland to point out that the only firetraps that were laid up were firetraps the beaching of which I. M. M. could make a fat profit. The others, whose abandonment might bring losses to the shipping companies, remain in service.

IMMEDIATELY after this, the head of the steamship inspection service announced that the real reason for laying up the Leviathan was to use it for a training ship for seamen, to teach them how to safeguard human life. This concern for human life is touching, but one reason for Mitchell's ouster was his insistence on a ship-safety bill that might have cost the shipping lines some money for equipment and men. For this he was fired, any suggestion to make the shipping lines spend money for safety being treason in the Commerce Department. In passing, it might be mentioned that one of the committee's inquisitors was Senator White, co-author of the Jones-White act, by which money for shipbuilding is freely ladled out to the private lines. Mr. White was highly indignant at Mitchell's charges of irregularities. For a brief moment the curtain lifted showing how a government that won't give the jobless a decent relief work wage takes pleasure in giving the shippers money with which to build their vessels; subsidies with which to run them; lenient inspection so as not to embarrass them and demands in return only a few inconsequentials in the way of campaign contributions and the building of hidden gun emplacements for rapid conversion of their graft for war purposes. If a ship can't make a profit, even with a subsidy, the ship is beached, but the subsidy remains. And if a Morro Castle goes up in smoke, the radio operator can always take the rap; or if the Sky Chief crashes and a Cutting is killed, the ground crew is available to take the blame. The Senate knows it is more important to keep subsidies alive than Senators. Cutting often annoyed Copeland anyway.

### *The Utilities Racket*

THE President is trying to teach capitalism to keep its pants buttoned. The fight on the Wheeler-Rayburn utility holding-company bill shows with how little success. The spectacular Insull and Kreuger crashes disclosed the need for a little more finesse in the holding-company field. They uncovered the legal brigandage made possible by use of the holding-company device in controlling vast financial structures with a small investment, in pyramiding profits on favored stock issues, in raising money by selling wall paper to the public, in padding expenses and in generally evading regulation. They also disclosed that regulation was no longer merely ineffective. It was an aid in maintaining and enlarging profits. The game was growing too obvious. The money changers having been driven out of the temple, Mr. Roosevelt turned his attention to the problem. In his utility holding-company message in March, the President almost hit the nail on the head. "It is idle," he said, "to talk of the continuation of holding companies on the assumption that regulation can protect the public against them. Regulation has small chance of ultimate success against the kind of concentrated wealth and economic power which holding companies have shown the ability to acquire in the utility field. No government effort can be expected to carry out effective, continuous and intricate regulation of the kind of private empires within the nation which the holding-company device has proved capable of creating." Here he was stating not only the case against the utility holding company, but the case against the whole liberal program of regulating and planning capitalism, for "private empires" greater than the power of any occasional brain-busters' reform government exist in every field of capitalism. Did Mr. Roosevelt go on to the inescapable conclusion, abolition of private property and the establishment of a Workers' State? Did he at least propose the abolition of holding companies? No.

WHAT the President outlined was a program to wet-blanket public resentment by apparent reforms, while leaving enough loopholes for a half-dozen Insulls. Some utility holding companies, Mr. Roosevelt admitted, "perform a demonstrably useful and necessary function." These were to be regulated. Those which were not "useful and necessary" were to reorganize as investment trusts. Management companies, one of the worst sources of abuse, were to be forbidden to hold stock in the companies they managed. But the companies managed were free to organize a management company "on a truly mutual and cooperative basis." Fees, my friends, were in the

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future to be reasonable. All other holding companies (and it is difficult to imagine one that could not squeeze through these loopholes) were to be positively, absolutely and completely abolished by 1940. And in case anybody still didn't get the hint, Mr. Roosevelt let it be known at a press conference recently that he considered Public Service Corporation of New Jersey and Niagara-Hudson Power of New York, two of the most powerful and unscrupulous holding companies in the business, examples of "good" holding companies. Nevertheless, the widows and orphans were marshalled, the poor investors organized and utility employes forced to send in their protests. The Hearst papers found that the bill "would be the most significant step the United States has taken toward the eventual socialization of all its industries." As we go to press, the bill is still in process of amputation. The naughty holding companies which can't slip through loopholes as broad as a barn door will be abolished only if the Wall Street controlled Securities and Exchange Commission feels like it. Natural gas companies will not even be regulated. The special tax on dividends paid to holding companies had been removed. The bill was toothless as a hag. Mr. Roosevelt is expected to fight. The New Deal is at stake. The bill will go to conference and in conference a few gleaming white molars will be added, for there is such a thing as being too obvious. But the molars will be the kind you put into a glass of water at night.

### *Mr. Green Again*

BULLETS were ricocheting about the American industrial landscape last week when William Green, president of the A. F. of L. called the reporters in. (Two men had just been killed in the textile strike at Union, S. C., a lumber worker has been murdered at Eureka, Calif., the dirt wasn't level on the graves of the two shot in the Omaha car strike, when Green made his statement which went into a couple of thousand newspapers by morning.) The statement did not mention the shootings. Instead, it tore into the Reds. They were out to rip asunder and annihilate the American labor movement. Green got so worked up about the Communists that not one syllable of his statement dealt with the official terrorism spreading across the country and threatening the welfare of any man who works for a living. "The latest Communist maneuver," Mr. Green warned forty million American workingmen, was "another stab in the back." What provoked Green was the unconscionable way the militants in the labor movement were driving ahead for consolidation of their scattered ranks. The "stab in the back" was the merger of the former Fur Workers' Industrial Union ("that Communist union!") with the A. F. of L. union in the trade. This was of course a Red "maneuver" to smash organization of the furriers. But Mr. Green neglected to mention one fact: the "Red union" surrendered a strongly established organization of some 15,000 members—the overwhelming majority of the fur workers in the country—whereas the A. F. of L. union was relatively small. As punishment for this attempt to "split the labor movement" Mr. Green threatened the revocation of the union's charter. In fact he would revoke the charter of any union having any truck with the Reds.

BUT the rank and file had ideas of their own. Pietro Lucci, international president of the A. F. of L. union, stuck to his guns. He would "abide by the decision of the union" despite Mr. Green's taboo. A mass meeting of all New York furriers backed him up. Hundreds of protests have come in over the wires, the mail, through telephone to the A. F. of L. chief. Charles S. Zimmerman, for example, manager of Dressmakers' Union Local 22, of the I. L. G. W. U. charged Green with "copying the tactics" of the worst open shoppers in the steel and textile industries "who try to outlaw a large section of their employes" merely because they believe in the benefits of organization and unionism. Mr. Green seems to learn slowly. He apparently forgot his experience with H. R. 2827 which might have taught him caution. His circular last September to Central Labor Unions asking for expulsion of "individual Communists and Reds" found its way into innumerable union waste baskets. His categorical instruction to be wary of men who were pushing f- H. R. 2827 was completely ignor- thousand local unions, six -als, scores of Central Lab- state federations went on - -dorsing the unemployment insura- which everybody knew the Re- drawn up. These are fast-movi-


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Published weekly by the NEW MASSES, INC., at 31 East 27th Street, New York City. Mid West Bureau, 184 West Washington Street, Room 703, Chicago.


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Entered as second-class matter, June 24, 1926, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 10 cents. Subscriptions, $3.50 a year in U. S. and Colonies and Mexico. Six months $2; three months $1; Foreign $4.50 a year; six months $2.50; three months $1.25. Subscribers are notified that no change in address can be effected in less than two weeks. THE NEW MASSES welcomes the work of new writers, in prose and verse, and of artists. Manuscripts and drawings must be accompanied by return postage. THE NEW MASSES pays for contributions 173



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and Mr. Green has slowed up with age and affluence. Anybody standing in the way of the working class in its irresistible surge toward consolidation will inevitably be steamrollered all over the scene.

### *On the Mercury Picket Line*

SUPPORT for the strike of the seven editorial and office workers of the American Mercury is spreading. Not the least sympathy for the struggle was aroused by the usual rough tactics of the police and courts when the strikers and many sympathizers picketed the Fifth Avenue offices of the American Mercury last week. Sixteen men and women, among them William Mangold, Maxwell Stewart and Louis Kronenberger—the first two editors of The New Republic and Nation, respectively, the third, book reviewer for The New York Times—were arrested, jailed for three hours and taken to night court. Stewart asserted he was not picketing, merely watching. Pickets were not informed they were under arrest or of any charge, merely backed against the wall of the building by strong-arm methods and later taken to jail. Mounted cops charged into the crowd gathered on the sidewalk. In night court where the pickets were released on $5 bail there was further harassing delay. Most of the men and women did not have money with them. Although a representative of the Office Workers' Union was ready to furnish their bail, the police insisted on not paying attention to this for hours, meantime seeking to intimidate their victims by pretending they would all be taken back to jail for the night. Arrested about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, the pickets finally got out about 2 a.m. Mass picketing will take place every Wednesday afternoon while the strike lasts, the Office Workers' Union has announced. The newly-organized League of Women Shoppers is taking part in the demonstrations.

### *Partisan Review*

MANY of the contributors to our short story supplement are known only to readers of the revolutionary little magazines. During the past few years these publications have printed the work of a number of talented new authors. Many of them have been introduced by Partisan Review, the bimonthly of revolutionary literature. Kenneth Fearing, who has just published a volume of poems, is an editor and contributor. Nelson Algren ,whose novel, *Somebody in Boots,* was recently released by Vanguard Press, has appeared in its pages. It has also published some of the best proletarian short stories by Ben Field, Jack S. Balch, Meridel LeSueur, Tillie Lerner and others.

# The Crisis of the Middle Class

WHEN a worker operating a lathe in a steel mill has his wages cut from fifty cents to forty cents an hour, he knows exactly what has happened. He realizes that his loss is the stockholders' gain, that wages are being driven down so that profits may be made possible.

He knows where he stands—and he realizes that the owners stand on the opposite side of the fence.

If he joins a union or with other workers attempts to form a union in order to raise his standard of living and is beaten on the picket line by the clubs of cops and mill guards, again he knows where he stands—that the forces of the present system are working directly against his interests.

More and more during recent months, workers have come to a true realization of their position in a capitalist society. But the same cannot be said of the middle class. Nearly thirty millions of our people stand today between the millstones of economic pressure. Purposely trained to think of th[illegible] as part of the capitalist ma[illegible] have suffered perhaps more [illegible]her portion of the popula[illegible] are bewildered and over[illegible] what has happened to them.

[illegible]n a doctor, or a dentist, or a [illegible], or a small business man, or one of the millions of office workers who make up the "white collar" class, or an insurance agent or a gasoline station operator begins to feel the force of the depression, it is not always clear to him how his situation has come about.

The dentist and the doctor find that their patients don't pay; income is lessened. Meanwhile the cost of the materials they use, their rent and taxes, go up inordinately. The teacher who is doing a full time job on a "substitute's" salary finds that her room, clothes and food cost more and that her income is simply inadequate. And the salesman who hasn't seen an honest-to-God commission check in months finds that he still has to answer to the landlord.

These people do not naturally think of themselves as the victims of economic "enemies"—landlords, the owners of chain and department stores, tax collectors absorbing thirty cents out of every dollar. If they blame anything or anybody for their condition, it is "the depression"; or at the worst, "Wall Street" or "the bankers."

The factors that have for years tended to increase their living costs faster than their opportunities to make money are so bound up in the complicated structure of business, commerce and finance, that there is no one point at which they can say: "This one man —this group of stockholders—this injunction-dispensing judge and this group of policemen or militia company are interfering with my right to seek an income sufficient to my needs."

Nor is it possible for the members of the middle class to unite effectively in any concerted economic movement for their benefit. They are split a thousand ways by the antagonistic forces of the "competitive" system. Economically, the housewife is a million miles apart from the storekeeper who sells her food and clothing, yet both are at the mercy of the wholesaler who supplies them. There is no identity of interest between the sick person and the doctor, though with the problem of payment removed their purposes are identical. That is why "revolutionary" mass movements based on organizing the middle class as a separate and distinct class—such as is accomplished by fascist movements—cannot be revolutionary but must be reactionary.

It is for this reason that the middle class is politically the most backward of all classes of society. And it is for this reason also, that the capitalist class seeks to win the support of the middle class, as a "natural" (i.e. traditional) ally in the coming capitalist struggle against the working class for power.

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PERHAPS the most damning indictment of the capitalist system lies, however, not in its failure to provide financial security for its brain workers but in the way it stultifies their work and personalities, preventing the true expression of the capabilities with which each is endowed. For there is probably not a teacher, a laboratory worker, an accountant or any other brain worker who would not, and could not, do a better job under different conditions. . . . How inspiring, and at what a painful contrast, is the status of such workers today in the workers' republic in Soviet Russia, where the technically trained person is given a free outlet for his creative energies, free from the domination both of big business and the necessity of worrying where the next rent money is coming from; where every factory has its School for Inventors; where socialized medicine is a fact, not a dream; where even the trader and merchant fits into a vast scheme of socialized distribution; where real brains are rewarded and only the cleverness of greed and acquisitiveness is forcibly discouraged.

The middle class tends to disintegrate, to be absorbed by one or the other of the other classes. Parts of the middle class are constantly breaking away and becoming (a very small percentage) themselves owners, but the greater part actually, if not in their own identification, has become wage earners —or unemployed, the discards of society, the disenfranchised.[1]

It is not true that the middle class in America is growing or that "America is predominantly a middle-class nation." In 1929 the wage workers alone, excluding clerical workers, constituted 58.1 percent of the gainfully employed, a clear majority. In spite of its numerical increase, the percentage of the middle class has steadily *decreased* during the past fifty years.

For the natural progress of finance capital on the road to monopoly has been to swallow up the small business, the individual entrepreneur. The chain store has displaced the independent grocer; the steel trust owns all the little iron foundries that once dotted the Alleghanies; the country banker is in hock to a bigger banker whose controlling stock belongs to a Morgan or Rockefeller affiliate. For a while the "little man" keeps up the struggle, but finally he succumbs to the inevitable and "takes a job" with the corporation that put him out of business. And once on the corporation payroll he is an employe and subject to the same economic forces, the same pay-roll cuts and "reductions" as all other employes. He is a white-collar worker—and any moment he may be one of the unemployed: 80 percent of the engineers of the country are unemployed; 95 percent of all architectural workers.

The process goes on all up and down the line with infinite ramifications, but with one theme song and one general direction: the steady lowering of the middle-class man's income, his standard of living and his opportunity for asserting his individuality. Of course, some among the former independents manage to get relatively "good" jobs; they are the $10,000- and $15,000-a-year executives who still belong to the golf club, buy a new car every year and "don't know what in hell all this yawping is about . . . a good man can always get a job . . . the people don't want to work, they're too lazy." He may cheat at his income tax return, but he still denounces angrily (aping his money masters) the demands of the homeless and starving for relief at public expense. These people are the natural allies of the capitalists in the struggle. But they are only a very small (and increasingly smaller) percentage of the middle class.

WHY is the middle-class man or woman conservative? Why does he "naturally" align himself with the forces of reaction? Why does he react against the effort of labor to organize itself—why swallow so gratefully the lies of the conservative press that "outside agitators and Reds are to blame?" Why does he cheerfully join up in war as cannon fodder, Class A-1, following the flag and bugles? Why is he inclined to resent those who tell him that the world can be made a better place to live in?

It is because he has never learned to identify himself, politically or economically. It is because he feels so strongly that his own state cannot be bettered. All the Bruce Bartons and the self-advancement prophets to the contrary notwithstanding, he believes that the state of the world cannot be changed. "You can't change human nature." (But according to Maurice Hindus, human nature has been "changed" in an entire generation of boys and girls in Soviet Russia, who neither think the things nor subscribe to the prejudices of their ancestors.)

The middle-class man or woman is inclined to follow "leaders" rather than principles. The fact that the Republican and Democratic parties have for years been indistinguishable on all important points of social theory does not bother him, because he doesn't believe in the "platforms" but in the "good intentions" of the current candidate. He is a natural prey to the Huey Longs, the Father Coughlins, the Hearsts and the Smedley Butlers because he does not distinguish between promises and actions. He does not realize that their demagoguery is the same as Roosevelt's at the inception of his office, that in spite of brave words they intend to leave fundamental things, the profit set-up, absolutely unchanged. It was to such pipings that Hitler led the people of Germany to destruction. . . .

In America, from 1760 on, the major political revolts have been those of the farmers and the small business men generally against the power of the big industrial combines. Big business and finance have always won such struggles in the past, through their ownership of the dominant political parties; through their economic power; they dealt the cards and made the rules of the game. But today, a new factor has entered the situation. For the first time, the farmers and the small business men are lined up with the vast army of middle-class office and professional employes and the workers. These elements have only to realize their power and avoid being misled to achieve a final victory.

To the middle classes, we say this: you are the natural allies of the workers. Your bread is their bread; your house roof is their house roof. When they are homeless and without food, you are too. . . . You do not share the prosperity of those who own the machinery of production. In the pinch of depression you, not they, feel it. You need only to know yourselves to know that your place is by the side of the workers, aiding them, following them, fighting in their ranks for the common objective: the right to live and to be happy.

[1] What has been happening to the middle class is graphically illustrated by the income-tax tables. Only about 7,000,000 people—even in so-called "prosperity" years—have ever had enough money to bring them within even the low limit of "taxable incomes." About half of those reporting income taxes are in the group that earns from $2,000 to $5,000 a year; these are probably almost all engaged in "middle-class" occupations. This group, in 1926, accounted for 31% of the total income reported; but by 1931 their combined incomes were only 22% of the total. In the meantime the number of those reporting incomes over $5,000 a year (and up to a million a year and over) dwindled slightly from one-fourth of the total number to one-fifth, but still managed to account for from 50 to 60 percent of the country's total incomes!

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*William Gropper*

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# What Is Communism?

## *9. Labor Party and Communist Party*

EARL BROWDER

FROM among a score of questions about the problem of a Labor Party and the relation of the Communist Party to it, the following is selected as representative:

> "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" Why does the Communist Party advocate the formation of another Party, a Labor Party, instead of calling upon all workers to come directly into the Communist Party? Do you think you can thereby inveigle the workers into a revolution they don't yet want, or have you abandoned the idea of revolution?

We are speaking for ourselves, dear questioner, in the sense of speaking for the revolutionary program of the Communist Party, popularizing it among ever-wider masses and building our Party. In fact, we are doing this on a scale never before seen in our country. It is exactly as one means of rooting the Communist Party among greater masses than ever, that we advocate the formation of a federative Labor Party, based upon the trade unions and other mass organizations and including the Communist and Socialist Parties.

Our proposal for the formation of a Labor Party is one feature (at present the outstanding one) of the policy of "the united front." The principle of the united front policy is that, faced with the attacks of the capitalist class, the workers must bring together all their organizations for joint defense of their immediate interests, in spite of all differences that exist regarding the bigger issues of program, of questions about whether capitalism should be overthrown, how it is to be done, what kind of government and social system should follow the capitalist system. The united front may be a joint fight on a single issue, for a limited time; or it may be for a rounded-out program of immediate demands for a long period. A Labor Party, such as we propose, is only a higher form of the united front, carrying the fight for as many immediate demands as possible over into the political field, into the struggle for positions in the elected institutions of government, to make use of these positions to advance the united struggle against the capitalists.

It is not a part of the permanent program of the Communists, this proposal for a Labor Party. It is raised at present only in the United States and here only because of the particular circumstances of the historical moment. What are these special circumstances which led us to propose a Labor Party?

As the result of nearly six years of economic crisis, we witness the first stages of development of a political crisis in the United States. Large masses are being disillusioned with the Roosevelt New Deal, as they were previously disillusioned with the Hoover Old Deal. The two traditional major political parties of American capitalism, Republican and Democratic, are openly exhibiting all signs of disintegration. A hundred signs of this can be noted, outstanding among them being: the Epic and Utopian movements in California, spreading also to the Northwestern States; the new "Progressive" Party of the LaFollettes in Wisconsin; the renewed life in the Farmer-Labor Party movement controlling Minnesota; the spectacular rise of the radio priest, Father Coughlin, and his Union for Social Justice; the movement around the Southern demagogue, Huey Long, with his "share-the-wealth" program; the Townsend old-age pension and currency scheme, with its claimed nineteen million signatures of support.

On the one hand, the leadership and program of these multi-varied movements are either almost indistinguishable from the old parties (LaFollette) or are fantastically utopian and not intended ever to be carried out; they are therefore reactionary in character and a part of the general drift toward fascism in the ranks of the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the mood and the ideology among the masses supporting these movements represent a break away from the old parties and from the present capitalist system; these masses are in the process of being revolutionized, they are looking for a new way out, they can be led upon the paths of struggle against the capitalist class and thus prepared through their own experience for the socialist revolution.

Millions of workers and middle-class strata have cut loose from their old moorings. They are adrift in a stormy sea of social upheaval. They follow false leaders and programs. The problem is, how can these millions most quickly be brought into the paths of class struggle, to understand their own class interests, to recognize the class enemy?

We of the Communist Party would be delighted if we could swing these millions immediately behind our program and Party. But we are cold realists. We know that these masses still lack the experiences necessary to bring them solidly under our leadership. At the same time it is urgently, vitally necessary to prevent these masses from being drawn into the channels of a fascism which would create new and formidable obstacles to the further development of the struggle.

In our judgment this direction of the millions now breaking away from the old parties into the path of struggle against Wall Street (that is, against monopoly capital), could best be achieved under present conditions by bringing, first of all, the trade unions (and around them all other mass organizations of the exploited people) to a united effort to extend their fight for immediate economic and political demands to the field of independent political action, federating all their organizations into a Labor Party.

A possible program for such a Party, having the broadest immediate mass appeal and raising a minimum of problems difficult for immediate mass understanding, would contain something like the following points:

a. To support by all means the strike movements for union recognition, against every wage cut, against every lengthening of hours and worsening of conditions.
b. To fight for the immediate enactment of the Workers' Unemployment, Old-age and Social Insurance Bill, now before Congress as H.R.2827.
c. For immediate payment of the veterans' bonus, as embodied in H.R.8365.
d. For the Farmers' Emergency Relief Bill, before Congress as H.R. 3471.
e. For complete equality for the Negro people, including the enactment of a Negro Rights Bill.
f. For civil rights, repeal of all alien and sedition legislation directed against the masses, repeal of deportation laws.
g. For the struggle against fascism and imperialist war, on the lines of the broad united front program of the American League Against War and Fascism, which includes full support to the peace policy of the Soviet Union.

Here are immediate issues that already involve in organization and struggles from eight to ten millions of people, with the immediate possibility to draw in another ten millions. A strong lead given toward the inclusive federation of all organizations now fighting for one or another of these things, into a joint struggle for all of them through a Labor Party, would have the possibility of immediate and decisive successes.

Would such a Labor Party, with such a program, be anything such as our questioner suggested, an attempt to "trick" the masses into revolution? Nothing of the kind. There is no trick about it; everything is open and above board. There is no doubt, however, the experience of such a movement would give a revolutionary education to the masses. The Communist Party, by being in such a movement, by being in the very forefront, would influence it greatly, would strengthen it and at the same time strengthen itself. Would this, on the other hand, mean abandoning the idea of revolution? On the contrary, it would bring the masses, through their own experiences, face to face with the problems of state power and therefore all the problems of revolution, in the quickest possible way. Such a Labor Party, without the revolutionary program of the Communists for socialism and

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the proletarian revolution, would develop all the issues of every-day life. Therefore, it would develop the masses toward the Communist program. For our program does not arise independently in our minds, it arises from life itself, from all the multitude of problems of the masses, from the problems of bread and butter and a chance for peaceful life.

That is why we are for a Labor Party. And that is why our proposal for a Labor Party is at the same time the most important measure of the moment for extending the influence and strength of the Communist Party.

ANOTHER correspondent raises an important question when he asks:

> Why do you spend so much time and energy trying to get a united front with the Socialist Party, the leaders of which spurn your efforts? The S.P. is smaller in membership than the C.P., even though it still casts a larger vote in some important places. Why not concentrate all forces upon the struggle for a broad Labor Party, for trade-union unification, etc., which are a thousand times more important than the small and moribund S.P.?

This questioner has failed to understand that our efforts to arrive at a united front with the Socialist Party and its followers are in no way an effort to *substitute* this for the broader united front, but on the contrary, is a *means to arrive quicker* at that goal.

First of all, it is a mistake to think of the S.P. as "negligible," as "dead or paralyzed." True, the S.P. is small in membership; and at present it is in the throes of a deep-going faction fight and split. But neither of these facts argue for ignoring it. If it is small, so is the Communist Party; and it still counts among its followers some thousands of workers with an elementary understanding of socialism and class relations. These socialist workers are not among the most backward, but on the contrary, they must be counted generally among the most advanced, on the whole ahead of the broad masses. It is of the most enormous importance to win them to united action with the Communists; it will multiply our joint strength at least tenfold among the masses.

The building of a united front between the Socialist and Communist Parties is one of the keys to the creation of a broad Labor Party, it is one of the keys to uniting the scattered trade-union forces, it is one of the keys to the unity of the unemployed mass organizations. Our Central Committee has placed the question of the fight for this united front as one of the first questions of the day.

The "old guard" leaders of the Socialist Party are fighting against the united front with an hysterical frenzy. The "militants" are for the united front "in principle" but always find too many practical obstacles to be able to do anything. The majority of the members and followers favor the united front, but do not find channels to express themselves, nor leaders to help. Yet in spite of all the united front moves forward.

The chief argument against united action advanced by the S. P. leaders is to the effect that they must choose: *either,* unity of action with the broad masses of workers in the American Federation of Labor; *or,* unity of action with the Communists. They say the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. forces this position on them. This is a *camouflage,* to hide their real alignment, which is with William Green and the Executive Council but against the broad masses of membership as well as against the Communists. This camouflage was torn to bits by the New York fur workers of the A. F. of L., who finally united with the independent union (including Communists) but only in open struggle against the S. P. leaders who joined with Green in threatening to expel the entire union, all the broad rank and file of the A. F. of L. fur workers, if they dared to unite with the Communists. Unity of the broad masses was only achieved by going against the "old guard" S. P. leadership.

We Communists are frankly critical of our own past weaknesses and mistakes in approaching the Socialist worker for a united front. We have nothing to change in our basic analysis of the political problems and relationship of classes, groups and tendencies. But we have much to change in our practical work and in our approach to the Socialist workers. We are striving for a frank, comradely contact and discussion with them on all our common problems. We are willing to listen to and carefully examine all criticisms against us and hope to be able to gain much from it; we want to reciprocate and give the Socialists the benefit of our observations and criticisms.

The "old guard" screams frantically that we Communists are only maneuvering to destroy the Socialist Party. They do not explain why a united front would be more dangerous for the Socialist Party than for the Communist Party, nor why any really working-class party should lose anything from a greater unity against the capitalists. They even see a "conspiracy" against them when the Communists advise those Socialist workers who are discouraged and thinking of dropping out of the S. P., not to do so, but to stay in their Party and continue the fight for the united front.

It is clear from the experience of the united front in France, that all workers have only to gain from the united front. In France they succeeded in stopping the advance of fascism. The united front, after a year, was unanimously endorsed by the Congress of the French S. P. Only the united front halted the break-up and disintegration of the French Socialist Party.

The Socialist Party of the United States is in a deep crisis. The "old guard" is openly organizing a split. If the majority leadership of the S. P. had the courage to come out boldly for the united front, like their French brothers, they could isolate and defeat the "old guard." If they fail to do this, it is clear the "old guard" will smash up their Party rather thoroughly. It is not the Communists who are disrupting the ranks of the Socialist workers.

*Earl Browder's final article in this series, to appear next week, will discuss a Soviet America.*

# Letters from Readers

## Comment by EARL BROWDER

### Is There An "Inner Shrine"?

TO THE NEW MASSES:

I have been reading your articles on "What is Communism?" with the greatest interest and pleasure. Several times I was tempted to write to THE NEW MASSES and express my appreciation of your valuable contributions. The fundamental principles of Communism cannot be too frequently expounded.

Always having been a liberal and by nature a rebel, I stand by principle and emotionally for the underprivileged. Unfortunately, I was not "to *their* manor born." For the which, however, I hate being frozen out every time I want to get close to the movement. Those in my class have a double task—we have almost more to unlearn than to learn. At every repulsion on the part of the "inner shrine," we lose something—courage! Why should we give up the pot of flesh, only to find that we are not admitted to the thin gruel?

If the economic revolution were so near at hand, I could appreciate the "holier than thou" attitude, but we have still a long mile to "Tipperary," hence, en route, a comraderie should be permitted between the middle-professional and working classes.

I am impelled to send in this little contribution by the concluding paragraph of Mr. Browder's article in the current number (May 21st) of THE NEW MASSES. It is too long a paragraph to incorporate into this contribution; my quarrel with Mr. Browder is his condescension to "every individual of the enemy classes . . . such people have no value or significance, beyond the moment, for the revolutionary movement. What momentary value they may have is usually more than offset by the confusion and dangers which they bring with them."

Quite an indictment against the middle-class, so-called intellectuals. At this moment, I cannot see how a laborer who comes to the revolutionary movement with no more qualifications for the "necessity of abolishing capitalism" can and is "able to make serious and lasting contributions to the cause of socialism."

Even as I write, I realize that Mr. Browder stands for orthodox Communism. I cannot quarrel with him on that stand. But Lenin was surely more flexible when he introduced the N.E.P., realizing that to take a step back, often promotes two steps forward.

I am a member of the lower middle-class. I am thinking in terms of Communism and am taking that stand everywhere and among members of my family and friends. I am unprepared for conversion by "absolute immersion." I would like to be allowed to be a liaison between my class and the brave men and women in the thick of the fight. I know my limitations as a worker for Communism, but, nonetheless, I earnestly wish to give my mite.

While I do not want Communists to "fall on my neck," I resent the orthodoxy which keeps me out of the "charmed circle." Perhaps if I were allowed on the periphery—I mean I and my class—we could eventually join the ranks and further the cause of socialism (I do not mean New York socialism).

In my many talks with people veering leftward, I feel I am not only writing now for myself, but for

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a large majority who are thinking very earnestly, if not so clearly, on the forthcoming revolution, for which many of us are quite ready to make extreme sacrifices.

New York. E. R.

*Comment:* Our correspondent makes the cardinal mistake of imagining there is some "inner shrine" or "charmed circle" in the revolutionary movement. Seeking for any such Holy Grail, she is doomed to perpetual disappointment and permanent frustration. She will never arrive there, not because anyone is shutting her out, but simply because there is no such thing.

There may be here and there some remnants of a sectarian "holier than thou" attitude in the movement; but this is mostly to be found precisely among the newest recruits and most strongly among the middle-class elements; it is rare among the workers and especially rare among the experienced revolutionists (which is where, presumably, any "inner shrine" would be located!).

The comradeship that our correspondent is looking for does not drop down from the skies. It does not come from "conversion by absolute immersion." It is only to be found as a by-product of common practical work in everyday life. The problem, then, is to find some practical way of participating in and helping the work of the movement. From that everything else follows.

There is serious misunderstanding of my previous article in that quotation given, which drops out some important words and then accuses me of "condescension" toward middle-class individuals. To quote me as saying "every individual of the enemy classes . . . such people have no value or significance, beyond the moment, for the revolutionary movement," is a gross distortion. What I said was that those who come to the movement *"through temporary and unstable moods and sentimental ideas"* have no value beyond the moment and even bring with them dangers of confusion. This, of course, does not apply to those who have some basis of serious understanding, something more permanent than unstable moods and sentimental ideas.

We cannot, of course, accept our correspondent's thought that these articles represent "orthodox Communism," while the teachings of Lenin do not. If these articles have any value, it is only to the extent that they faithfully apply the full range of Lenin's contribution to our American problems.

Our correspondent seems to be still searching for an emotional solution of her problems. But that will only come indirectly when a more basic way has been found in practical, every-day political life. Turn your attention in that direction.

*William Sanderson*

# Twilight of Mosley

**M. B. SCHNAPPER**

LONDON.

"BRITAIN will find her greatest destiny through fascism . . . We are determined to build here the greatest state in the world . . . England has an historic right to be in India and we don't intend to leave. . . . Only fascism can protect England from the menace of Communism. . . .

"If England is to pull itself out of the present crisis, if England is to fulfill her manifest destiny in the world, if England is to . . . then England must and will adopt fascism."

The speaker was a youthful Blackshirt in the squalid St. Pancras district of London. Blackshirt was written all over him: black his pants, black his sweater-shirt — black his words. He spoke well, if bombastically; the tricks of oratory stood him in good stead when at loss for a convincing statement. And his little audience of fifty—a self-blending mixture of white-collar workers and manual laborers—seemed to listen attentively. Sprinkled here and there in the audience were stolid Blackshirts, hands folded across the chest, faces taut, bodies sternly erect. Disciplined men, these—disciplined in a ludicrous sort of way.

Several Blackshirts stood guard by one of the notorious Blackshirt armored cars. (According to the Earl of Kinnoul, the Blackshirts have twenty-five such armored cars, each constructed of heavy steel and capable of carrying twenty persons.)

A voice rose from the audience. "What has fascism done for the folks in Italy and Germany?" Obviously the question is an unfriendly one. The questioner is a bluff old fellow, swathed in a huge and dirty scarf. A hotel porter, possibly.

The Blackshirt speaker, annoyed, hesitates a moment and then spews the lingo of Oswald Mosley, Blackshirt No. 1:

"Why, fascism has revitalized life in those countries, contrary to the lying propaganda you read in the newspapers. Hitler has practically wiped out unemployment. Mussolini has raised the standard of living and given his countrymen a real sense of national pride! . . . Uh—"

"Oh yeah?"

"So Hitler is just a bloomin' angel!"

"Did you ever hear of any sort of terror in Germany?"

"Come now, my boy, Hitler is no pal of yours."

"You know perfectly well that Hitler and Mussolini have stepped on the necks of the common people."

The heckling developed into a minor storm suddenly. Just as suddenly the Blackshirts swung into action; they began to shove and beat the dissenters in the audience. Equally suddenly the white-collar and manual workers, uniting almost spontaneously, went for the Blackshirts. Fists flew. A woman screamed hysterically as two Blackshirts, armed with a heavy piece of rubber hose, attacked a man near her. A variety of missiles came hurtling from the small windows of the armored cars: stones, milkbottles, sticks.

In a few minutes the Blackshirts had whipped up the anger of the entire crowd to such a heat that they were forced to retreat to their armored car, several nursing bruises. Two persons in the audience were bleeding at the mouth, another had a swollen jaw.

That was a typical though unimportant Blackshirt meeting, observed by the writer. Here are some of the more important meetings and their casualties:

Several beaten at Glasgow Green by a Mosley bodyguard composed of "Kid" Lewis and other prizefighters. September, 1931.

An anti-war meeting at Croydon was disrupted by Fascist hooligans. Three injured. August, 1932.

Rubber-hose weapons first introduced at Manchester meeting from which opposing workers were driven out by these weapons. March, 1933.

Evidence at Gateshead-on-Tyne court case revealed that Mosley's supporters carried pieces of steel wrapped in cloth and rubber bludgeons. May, 1934.

Armed with metal knuckles, Blackshirts attacked students and workers at Oxford. Three women students stated: "Some Blackshirts kicked in the face and neck men who already could not struggle. Certain men were thrown bodily down the stone steps." November, 1933.

Two men ejected from Bristol meeting. One carried out unconscious, his head swathed in bandages and covered with blood. March, 1934.

At Brighton the chairman of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement was beaten unconscious by Blackshirts at a meeting which they had invited him to attend. March, 1934.

Blackshirt brutality reached its height at the Olympia meeting in London. According to the report of the Home Secretary, seven men were treated for serious injuries at the West London Hospital alone. It was estimated that there were about a dozen other unreported cases. May, 1934.

Repulsed by the Blackshirts' violence, the British bourgeoisie and working class have been, at least temporarily, disillusioned about the virtues of Mosley's brand of fascism. Since the Olympia meeting, almost exactly a year ago, the Blackshirt movement has declined rapidly. Gone are all the huge meetings, gone are the Rothermeres and other endorsers, gone are the big membership campaigns. Many of the followers who sincerely

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believed that Mosley would lead the way to a better social order have realized the true character of the Blackshirt movement and have left it. In May, 1934, Mosley *claimed* to have about 15,000 members; today it is estimated that he *actually* has about 5,000 members. Within the past year there have been many wholesale resignations; during one month two groups, one of 200 members, another of 250 members, resigned in London alone. More and more of Mosley's salaried lieutenants have been deserting; the resignation of Captain Bruce Norton, one of Mosley's closest aides, is only the most recent of a long series of similar resignations.

The demise of the movement is particularly, though perhaps somewhat superficially, evident at the Blackshirt barrack headquarters in London which this writer visited recently. When these headquarters — a formidable building suggesting an armory—were opened in August, 1933, there was much Blackshirt ballyhoo about housing 5,000 fighting fascists on the premises, about elaborate training facilities. Today this great fortress of British fascism is almost unknown to even the people living in its vicinity. Despite the fact that I was only a few blocks away not one of the persons I questioned knew the locality of or knew the existence of the fascist headquarters. A few fascist stickers on the bleak building singled it out. A Blackshirt guard, stiff as a Fifth Avenue doorman, marched up and down the lobby — guarding Mosley only knows what. Not one of the many pretensions of the Blackshirt movement could explain his presence. He just marched and marched. A conspicuous notice helped solve the absurdity. This guard, according to a long list of regulations specially drawn up for his sake, must not engage in a tit-a-tat with anyone in the lobby, must be sure to have his pants pressed and his hair combed and, most importantly, must "behave at all times with true Blackshirt dignity."

Not daring to disturb his "true Blackshirt dignity," I entered a room near at hand to get some information. Two Blackshirts decked out in official regalia were engaged in a conversation about a movie they had seen. Ten minutes later one looked up at me, for the first time aware of my presence. "What are you doing in this room?" The question embarrassed me. Had I overheard some secret official pronouncements on the cinema? Uh-uh—could I buy a copy of the latest Blackshirt? A batch was lying on the top of his desk.

"Not here. Apply at the propaganda bureau."

I asked where I could find Mr. Mosley's office.

"Blackshirt? Mosley won't see you if you're not. But you can inquire two doors down."

Two doors down I found seated at a desk in the center of a huge room a Blackshirt reading, surreptitiously, I thought, The London Daily Express, Britain's tabloid. I put my problem to him. He eyed me suspiciously. What did the likes of me want with Mr. Mosley? I drew myself together importantly and explained that I merely wished to interview Mr. Mosley about the trends toward fascism in the United States. Sorry. Mr. Mosley was resting at his country estate for a few weeks. I could, however, get the information I desired in Mosley's pamphlet, "Blackshirt Policy," to be obtained at the propaganda bureau.

Were any Blackshirt meetings being held in London during the current week, I asked. I expressed a desire to attend one. No, he didn't know of any. He made several telephone calls to various bureaus about the matter. He finally unearthed a street meeting in St. Pancras during the following week (the meeting described earlier in this article). Further inquiry revealed that neither street nor membership meetings were being held regularly.

The propaganda bureau turned out to be another huge bare room, containing a miserable old table and a dilapidated china-ware closet. Thieves and fascists don't trust each other. What there was of Blackshirt literature—several dozen pamphlets and leaflets—was under lock and key in the china-ware closet. Apparently sales had not been frequent; dust had gathered on the pamphlets I examined.

Knowing that the regulations strictly forbid visitors to go further than the lobby of the building I was, of course, tempted to seek out the mysteries of Blackshirtism which were being kept from the public, to see the training apparatus of the 5,000 fighting fascists I had heard so much about. One report had it that there were many "dungeons" in the building and that one was known as the "Death Cell" and had a skull and cross-bones on its door. All I found, after wandering about the building for some fifteen minutes were a few rooms with cots in them, a room that was vaguely reminiscent of a gymnasium, about a score of rooms with desks (the building had once been a school) and a long procession of somber corridors and totally empty rooms.

These were the remnants of Mosley's Blackshirt movement — a sharply reduced membership, irregular meetings, restless unemployed youngsters acting as officials, a meager supply of literature and a barren building.

# A Letter from Spain

CARCEL MODELO DE MADRID.

I'M COLD as hell. Just been locked up. I'm alone and not in the gallery of the political prisoners, but in Cell 835, Fifth gallery, common-law prisoners. The other comrades have also been singled out by cells, incommunicado. Empty walls, iron bars, cold cement floors. Cold everywhere. I'm wrapped up in two woolen blankets and still shiver. Haven't had any food today. Got some rice my comrade sent me. But I don't want to eat. Just don't want to. Perhaps she and the child are hungry. This cell is colder than an iceberg. My little alcohol stove, my books, my jail games, my thousand little nothings that helped pass away the time are gone. Where to? Hell knows. Hell and the jail-guards.

First gallery, the gallery of the political prisoners, has been turned upside down. Shaken. Uprooted. The Gorki University has ceased functioning. What happened? The political prisoners are scattered in the four other galleries. Mixed up with the criminals, thieves, pickpockets. . . . What happened?

Today is Sunday. Heavy fog covers this part of the city. A big question mark hangs over the Carcel Modele, Madrid's city jail. What will happen?

Two revolutionists have been shot to death in Oviedo, just two days ago. Sergeant Vázquez and civilian Arguelles. The bourgeoisie thinks the battle is over and feels the ground ready to start a wave of White terror against the revolutionary working class.

Two men have been shot to death. Nobody dares to speak up. Not a sign of protest. Only the I.L.D. has issued a leaflet protesting against the death penalty.

Learning of this the bourgeoisie thinks: "The working class is frightened, torn to pieces. Let's clean up. This is the right time to get rid of some of the leaders. After Sergeant Vázquez and civilian Arguelles, González Pena, Bernardine Tomás and many others will follow."

Yesterday fifteen comrades left for the Big House. Day before there were twelve. We have just passed a short period during which many comrades have been freed, in spite of the prosecuting attorney's demands for sentences ranging from six to eighteen years. They begin tightening up again. Sentence of twelve years for handing out leaflets. Scores of comrades sent up to state penitentiaries. The bourgeoisie and the fascist elements think this is their time. Is it?

This Sunday was full of expectations. At eight A. M. every one of us is up. Up and ready. On other days we don't wake up till nine and later. Today everyone was up at eight. All the political prisoners gathered in communes, ready to pass the day. We close the doors from within. Nobody is going down today. On the halls there are only four comrades, detailed to bring us up food.

An impressive silence fills the whole gallery. In the yard of the Socialist and Communist prisoners there is nobody. In the anarchists' yard . . . the anarchists. They don't protest. Not concerned about the death penalty? We don't know. The anarchists a

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in their yard, laughing, playing about, having a grand time. Sergeant Vázquez and civilian Arguelles have been shot to death. Two revolutionists. Lerroux is the Premier. The anarchists don't protest.

It's near eleven o'clock, time for visits. A voice calls from below. A comrade is there to see one of his friends. The comrade stays in his cell. "Don't want to go down to visit," he calls back.

The officers are nervous. They ask each other: "What's up?" They answer each other, "Don't know."

Another comrade is called down. Another one. And another yet. Nobody leaves his cell. Finally:

"Eleven o'clock visits!" shouts an officer at the top of his voice. Nobody answers. Nobody leaves his cell. The officers know already what's going on. The political prisoners are protesting against the death penalty. You can hear the sound of the door keys locking the cells from the outside.

After having locked up every cell, they call down B——. He is the secretary of the Prisoners' Committee. Half an hour passes. They begin opening the cells, one by one, throwing things out into the yard below. They search us. The whole staff of prison guards enters each cell. In a cell just across ours we hear: "Take him down, the bastard! Down to the calaboose!" We can hear the struggling men swearing, shouting. Then a prolonged, gruesome silence. And a comrade's groaning down there.

A little later our own cell door is opened. The second officer enters. "Come on! Stand up!" He brings in the "rubber hose boys." We hardly had time enough to get our things together and leave. Again they search us thoroughly. By way of training, the officers and guards throw down into the yard below what few things we still have.

The wind blows through the iron bars of my glassless cell-window. Cold. Cold as hell. It's six o'clock already and still no food for us. A little later they bring us some wormy beans, a dirty metal dish and one spoon not a bit cleaner than the dish. Got to eat it, though. I'm hungry.

Now I'm communicating with the comrade next cell, by knocking on the wall and also through the bottom end of a glass. It seems that only Communists were brought here from the first gallery.

Last night the two committees met. The Socialists and the Communists. A joint decision was taken to go on with the movement today. Only De Francisco, Secretary of the National Committee of the Socialist Party voted against it. De Francisco represents in the Socialist Committee of the jail those Socialists living in the better section. Paid furnished rooms. These Socialist gentlemen wanted no protest. Things might get worse. Why risk so much just because they had shot two revolutionists? What did they care about that? What did they care about the scores of Socialist and Communist workers daily leaving for the big house? Better stay quiet. De Francisco in the name of these Socialist leaders voted against the protest. Irún and Zugazagoitia, two minor Socialist leaders, are with us. Against the death penalty. Against railroading of hundreds of workers into big prison terms. With the workers. De Francisco and the big shots are against us.

When the rank and file Socialists knew their leaders had betrayed the protest they raised hell. They are workers. They said they'd protest, against the will of the "leaders." Over their heads. They drew up a resolution against the rotten leadership, in support of the protest movement. They begin to see clear. To pierce the veil covering their eyes. For this reason I don't believe they have left us alone. I know they are with us.

The keeper has brought me some cold potatoes. I have run, skipped the rope, exercised a bit, all within these four walls. And still I am cold. Soon as they count us over for the night, I'll go to sleep. May wake up floating. Have to sleep on the floor and the faucet leaks plenty.

But this and much more can be endured. The revolution deserves this little sacrifice. Lose courage, me? Never! Neither I nor any of us here. Forward!! Vázquez and Arguelles are with us!

X——

# Chicago's Red-Baiting Comic Opera

**JOEL EDEN**

CHICAGO, ILL.

THERE were at least a thousand at the third performance. We sat on gilded chairs in a sort of semi-circle in the Red Room of the La Salle Hotel. Chairs were at a premium. More than half the spectators shoved and elbowed each other for standing room. Five Senators from Illinois sat on the rostrum. To their left sat President Robert Hutchins of the University of Chicago with his trustees and a staff of professors. To the right the Daughters of the American Revolution, Paul Reveres, Jungs, Dillings, Walgreens.

Mrs. Albert W. Dilling of the exclusive North Shore, author of *The Red Network,* was doing her stuff. She began in high, racing and panting at rapid fire. Communism is sweeping the universities of America . . . Communism is making inroads everywhere . . . Men and women in high office are lending a hand . . . She didn't pause for breath. She threw pamphlets at the Senators. "Here's evidence for you. I have a stack that high." She flung her arms in the air and her eyes glared wildly. "Yes, they are all affiliated with the Communists. Professor Robert Morss Lovett, Professor Schuman, Dean Gilkey. The whole University is filled with them! Jane Addams was on many of their committees. So is Mary MacDowell."

Senator Barbour broke in. He was a bit cynical and played up to the University side. "I notice you have Justice Brandeis of the U. S. Supreme Court in your book. Is he a Communist too?"

"Yes, he is. Judge Brandeis is one of the biggest contributors to that filthy, lousy little Communist college down in Arkansas." She flared up, thumbed through a pile of papers and threw some more evidence at the Senators. The inner circle of old ladies applauded. They all looked alike. Big fore and aft, or thin and dry. Some of us laughed, others booed and the ladies turned their necks and shot menacing glances at us. One called out, "They ought to kill every Communist."

For an hour and a half Mrs. Dilling pounded away. She had reams of evidence. She cited a score of names on the "Communist" American Civil Liberties Union. A half dozen University of Chicago professors were among them.

"What about Mr. Harold Swift?" piped up the jovial Senator with the flushed face.

"Oh, yes, there's a cream-puff type for you. He's just the kind who will permit Communists to talk at the University and then they'll cut his throat and take his money away. Some rich men play with chorus girls, some with booze and others with Communism. Mr. Swift wouldn't have a nickel left—he wouldn't have that pretty suit he wore at the last session—if the ideas he was playing with had their way."

Roaring laughter from all sides. Mr. Harold Swift of the hog-butcher family smiled sheepishly. President Hutchins sitting next to him bit at his pipe and also smiled.

She was at it again. Her voice high and hysterical, cracked. Her race-track tempo carried through page after page. She flung another document at the chairman. A well-groomed gent in his sixties applauded. "A wonderful woman—a remarkable book that book of hers." The legionnaire next to him nodded.

"She's been in a sanitorium for three years," muttered a young fellow to my left. "That's the polite word for nut-house."

Mrs. Dilling at last got through. She got

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up with a haughty shrug, a take-it-or-leave-it kind. There was laughter and booing. The old ladies (D.A.R.) chorus raised their heads with stern disapproval. They were annoyed to death. I caught a closer look at Mrs. Dilling. The skin was drawn tightly over her cheek-bones. Her eyes were manic-depressive. She seemed a very bitter, unhappy woman.

A little commotion, then Harry Jung, head of the American Vigilant Intelligence Association, took the stand. The second act began.

"I've been accused of being a petty racketeer," he shouted venomously. "I've been accused of being an anti-Semite. . . . I've been accused of being a Red-baiter and a strike-breaker. . . . As for being a petty racketeer, I want to say that I have spent 84,000 dollars of my own money in the cause of fighting Communism . . . As for being an anti-Semite——" Roaring laughter drowned the rest. But nothing could stop him.

" . . . As for being a Red-baiter and a strike-breaker," he raged, "yes, I am proud to say I am both." His Goering-like face bloated. It became redder and redder. He stood up to his full height throwing out his chest. "Yes, I am proud that I believe in the ideals of America." Prolonged applause from the D.A.R. chorus. He strode off in Napoleon fashion, shaking hands all around, then beamed Mussolini-ish, shaking his head from side to side.

The scene shifted for the moment. Mrs. Dilling kept popping up and down. A genial fellow laughed. "Is that Mrs. Dillinger?" A little spectacled man replied, "Yes, I believe it is." A big fellow in gray flannels turned sharply around. He was mad as hell. "You dirty little Jew!" he cried at the innocent, spectacled man. And crash, he sent him reeling against the wall. Pandemonium broke loose. Everyone screamed and shouted. Two young men grasped the big fellow. "You're under arrest," they cried. Two legionnaires yelled, "Say, you two, you're under arrest."

Barking, shouting, yelling. Finally someone with a tone of authority interrupted. "Hey there, you guys, are you officers?" "Yes, we are," they snapped.

"Then you're both under arrest for impersonating officers of the law."

The gavel pounded. The good Senators pleaded. But the comic opera had shifted to another part of the Red Room. Gilded chairs fell over one another. The big fellow in gray flannels drew a card from his wallet. "Here is my card," he pleaded trying to get out of the scrape. "You can get me any time you want." The neat blocked letters read, "Albert W. Dilling, Consulting Engineer, Monadonock Block." The spectacled man was Miles Goldberg, Secretary of the Anti-Defamation League.

A recess until 2:30 and then the next and final act began.

Prof. James Weber Linn, forty-one years at t University, boasted that 20,000 students sed through his academic hands. "And yet, mind you," he emphasized with knife-like precision, "I don't know one Communist among them. That's probably because there weren't any." He snarled at Mrs. Dilling and eyed her crew. "And as for my aunt, Miss Jane Addams, it was said by Mayor Kelly that she was one of the greatest women that ever lived." Prof. James Weber Linn was annoyed too. He is proud of his University.

A thin young man (Hulin Carrol, Jr.) with a big box and bulging gladstone bag filled with "documentary evidence" took the stand. Young Carroll hails from Texas and speaks a Southern drawl. His head shifted nervously as he read a voluminous report. His neck, a bit longish, gave him an ostrich look. Hulin Carroll, Jr., came to the University in September, 1933. On a bulletin board he observed a notice of a Socialist meeting. Out of curiosity he attended. Think of his amazement! He saw a young white girl with a Negro come arm in arm into the meeting hall. Yes, he even heard radical theories expounded at the University.

"I heard Prof. Harry Gideonse ridicule patriotism and Prof. James Kerwin ridicule representative government. Prof. Louis Wirth denounced the theory of racial purity."

And worst of all, copies of George Soule's book *The Coming American Revolution* circulated freely on the campus.

"And who is George Soule?" broke in Senator Barbour.

Carroll stuttered. He was taken aback, he didn't know. But Mrs. Dilling came to his rescue. She jumped out of her seat and sputtered forth a barrage of words. "He's the editor of the socialist-revolutionary magazine called The New Republic. The whole university is filled with that kind of stuff." The D.A.R. ladies beamed.

Hulin Carroll, Jr. continued. He was president of the Public Policy Association, he explained, organized to fight radicalism at the University of Chicago.

Dean Scott had objected to its list of speakers which included Col. McCormick of The Tribune, Col. Knox of The Chicago Daily News, Patrick Hurley, former secretary of war, and Eddie Rickenbacker. The University was a hotbed of subversive activities.

There was nothing very funny about Carroll. Like Dilling and Jung he was deadly earnest. He was also very dull. The performance was slowing down. The "standing room" was restless. Finally Carroll wound up and everyone breathed a great sigh of relief.

Karl Lockner quietly got up and in a clear voice said: "I should like to present the point of view of the Communist Party. I would like to say a few words."

"You can't speak here," yelled Senator Barbour.

"Why can't I? The Communist Party is a legal political party in the U. S."

A score of voices shouted. "Let him talk —what about your so-called free speech?"

Senator Barbour's red face looked shades redder next to his white hair. Karl Lockner smiled. He informed the Senators where he could be found if they wished him to testify. He gave the address of the District Office of the Communist Party.

A few more witnesses. A football captain and a fraternity "big shot" (that is how he referred to himself) testified that there was no Communism at the University. Yes, they knew Hulin Carroll, Jr. He was always inviting them to American Legion meetings. He came to them because they were popular and wanted their support. No, absolutely no Communism at the University of Chicago, never heard of it. . . .

Thus ended the third performance of Walgreen's red-baiting comic opera. The newspapers were filled with it. But about the case of the U. S. vs. Walgreen Company, Case No. 22585, there is a conspiracy of silence. The government charges against the Walgreen Company were: Adulteration of Elixir Iron, Quinine, Strychnine and Milk of Bismuth. The Walgreen Company entered a plea of guilty. There was a judgment on the verdict, and the Walgreen Company was fined $100.

The newspapers were silent about a lot of things. But so were the professors and leaders of the University of Chicago. With the exception of Robert Morss Lovett, the professors were a pretty sorry lot. Their part of the show was exceedingly dull. All they did was to defend themselves. Robert Morss Lovett, however, did not mince words. Of course, he spoke at the National Student League meeting. Of course, he would not bear arms in time of war. The others, though, hemmed and hawed.

Almost a thousand young men and women got their degrees this week at the University of Chicago. What in the devil are they going to do? Their families in most cases have dropped their living standards, and have become declassed, even proletarianized. During the past four years many of these students have been pushing and plodding with part-time jobs to get their tuition and lodging paid. It's been a tough grind. And now what have they to look forward to? A war—where they will be blasted to pieces—a government lop-sided, monstrous, indifferent to their needs?

Certainly, there is Communism at the University of Chicago—there is Communism in every university of America. That is precisely why the Dillings and Jungs, the D.A.R.'s and Paul Reveres are so hysterical. The university is the great stronghold of the middle class. The middle class is the great army holding up capitalism. Propping it up. Take away the middle class and capitalism is through. Mrs. Dilling expressed the sentiments of her class.

"The idea of letting those Communists speak at the University, the very ones who will cut our throats and take our money away!"

She didn't seem to mind her throat so much, but she let out an awful shudder at the thought of having "her money taken away."

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TORN LOOSE

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# A New Angle in Humor

**BRUCE MINTON**

THE New York press has been enjoying a field day of kidding. Something in the spectacle of the physically handicapped picketing the Work Relief Bureau, something about the crippled who hobble up and down before the entrance demanding work in place of charity, has prompted the newspapers to trot out their best in the way of sophisticated humor. Even The New York Times is facetious at the expense of those whose legs have been permanently twisted by infantile paralysis or tuberculosis, whose backs have been stiffened or whose limbs have been shortened and withered. The Times could not resist referring to the cases of the handicapped who have been arrested and brought into court as "the saga of the crippled pickets" and jokingly described the "tortured soul" of Magistrate Harris "impaled on the horns of a dilemma."

A visit to Relief Headquarters presents, so the press tells us, an amusing picture:

Police line the streets. The pickets file back and forth—many of them use crutches; some have braces or specially-built shoes and drag one foot painfully after the other; several lean on canes. They are mostly young—not many appear over thirty. They carry placards stating their demands for jobs plainly enough: they are all able to work, have all held jobs which they performed with ability and efficiency. Teachers, pharmacists, clerks, watchmakers, bookkeepers, a sprinkling of college graduates. They have been living on Home Relief—the married couples on $4.50 a week, the single on half this amount. They hobble past the office under the eyes of hostile police demanding not charity but work which they are competent to perform—as competent physically as President Roosevelt, similarly afflicted, is to fulfill the demands on him.

But if the sight of the lame is not funny enough, there are always the smiles that come while talking to individual pickets. A nineteen-year old girl receives $2.75 a week and rent. Her shoes—made to order so that she can walk—cost $45. She throws her leg far out as she walks, twisting her whole body: she had infantile paralysis as a child. She trained as a stenographer, held down steady jobs. Now there is no place for her. She is a burden on her family. She wants to work. She looks one seriously in the face, unaware of the humor of her case.

Or the expert watchmaker. He sold his tools long ago because he wanted to keep off relief. He is married to a physically-handicapped girl. She, too, needs specially-built shoes. She applied for them at Relief Headquarters; the doctor issued a prescription and the shoes were ordered. That was eight weeks ago. Since the picketing started, the shoe-order has been cancelled. Her husband was offered work—he limped to Twenty-third Street and was sent six blocks to Broadway; there he was told to go nine blocks to Twenty-eighth Street. He was interviewed, despatched to the job. He was accepted, on condition that he owned his own tools—valued at $150. Before he could be considered for the job, he must be a pauper; before he could take the job, he must buy tools to the tune of a small fortune. He was unable to take the position. . . .

A middle-aged man with a stiff back and bad shoulder is also on the picket line. He had managed to land the position of janitor a few months before—employed by the Work Relief Bureau. But no sooner did he get accustomed to the work than he was discharged, handed a pick and shovel and told to apply for day-laborer's work. Physically unable to comply, he was dismissed from relief because of his failure to cooperate.

In May, 200 afflicted men and women formed the League of Physically Handicapped and stated their demand for jobs. Mayor La Guardia was unable to see a delegation—he was entertaining a baseball team from Hawaii. The League picketed Work Relief Headquarters. A delegation of six telegraphed Administrator Knauth for an appointment. When they arrived at the office, they were told that Mr. Knauth had suddenly left town. They were greeted by the assistant, Dr. Gambs, who refused to act on their demands. The members of the delegation announced that they would stay in the office until Administrator Knauth saw them and acceded to their request for jobs. Dr. Gambs exploded—all right, he threatened, you can stay but you can't have food brought up here and we won't feed you. For fifty-six hours, the six were forbidden food. They remained in the office, sleeping on tables and benches. On the sidewalk below, the picket line was reinforced by 5,000 youths from the United Youth Day demonstration. They were forcibly dispersed by the police. But each day, the handicapped reformed their lines, joined by other organizations and particularly by the members of the Writers' Union. It was not a pretty sight—despite the jokes in the press—to see the handicapped limping in front of the door twenty-four hours a day. It got on the nerves of the administrators. On the eighth day—the delegation still camped on the twelfth floor at headquarters—the Work Relief Bureau called the police. Mayor La Guardia circled the building in his car to see that all was in readiness. And then the police swept into the street.

The melee that followed was particularly hilarious, according to press reports. For example, the police had been instructed not to use clubs. So they knocked the crutches out from under the pickets' arms and when a victim fell helpless to the sidewalk, they kicked at him with their heavy shoes. They twisted one crippled boy's arm. The boy cried, "Don't do that. I'll come along." The police replied, "Easy now," and continued to twist the arm. A girl was beaten until she was sick—she lay on the sidewalk for over half an hour before she was taken away by officers of the law. And while this went on, Administrator Knauth watched from the building and at the end observed with philosophical emotion, "Oh well, that's life, what can you do?" To reporters, he stated, "I didn't see any brutality."

The excuse for calling the police, according to the Relief administrators, was that employes at headquarters objected to the sight of crippled pickets. The newspapers headlined this, adding a jocular touch here and there. But the employes, when questioned, indignantly denied that they had anything but sympathy for the handicapped. And contempt for the police who after arresting and terrorizing the pickets, forcibly carried the members of the delegation out of the building and dumped them on the sidewalk.

The beating of the lame—somehow it just doesn't seem to fit into the picture of Americanism that Mr. Hearst has been trying to force down the public's throat. The newspapers find it funny. Psychologists can perhaps explain this phenomenon—children and imbeciles laugh when they see men on crutches.

There is one little point still to be mentioned. The Hearst press has naturally led the scoffing sneers against the pickets. But Mr. Hearst is not always immune to the tragedy and pathos around him. The growing boycott against his newspapers has lowered sales at a rate alarming to his patriotic heart. And in consequence, Mr. Hearst has begun to employ crippled and consumptives and starving children; the circulation department rounds up the deformed and unfortunate and sends them from door to door with heart-rending stories. In nine cases out of ten, the plea works like a charm and Mr. Hearst chalks up another sale. Children are decked up in rags, taught harrowing stories about hungry brothers and sisters. Mr. Hearst is helping the underdog—by exploiting children and the physically handicapped, keeping tab on their sales and seeing that they don't flag in their efforts. They walk miles a day. . . .

It all goes to show that the radicals miss a lot of fun out of life: they can't go down Broadway and laugh until they get pains in their sides at people carrying banners, "We Don't Want Charity. We want Work!"

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## *SHORT STORY SUPPLEMENT*

# The Proletarian Short Story

ALAN CALMER

TEN or twelve years ago, Mike Gold was almost the only American writer who was concerned with the proletarian short story. A few years later other writers began to experiment with it. One of the first results was "Can You Hear Their Voices?" which has become a classic of American revolutionary literature. Jack Conroy's short narratives of the industrial worker and Ben Field's early stories of the Red farmhand were also printed at that time.

But only in the past few years has the appearance of a proletarian story ceased to be a rare event. The revolutionary "little magazines," as well as other publications, have recently added dozens of tales to our stock of proletarian fiction—written mostly by young authors from all sections of the country. These young people are bound together by ties more fundamental than geography or age. In most cases, their work has been proletarian from the very start.

Many of the older, more mature prose artists—whose first work was not proletarian in outlook—have also turned to the working-class for their material. While most of them have concentrated on the novel, some have written distinguished stories of workers' struggles, like Caldwell's sharecropper tales, Albert Halper's "Scab!" based on the taxi strike, and James T. Farrell's "The Buddies," dealing with a teamsters' union.

In spite of these achievements, however, the net result is not very impressive. A body of Red stories has not as yet assumed form in this country. There is still nothing in sight that looks liks a proletarian *Winesburg, Ohio,* or a revolutionary *In Our Time.* Even the occasional successes have been smothered among mediocre tales or published only in the little magazines.

Although we have a number of talented story-tellers, a great deal of their work has been marred by glaring defects. What causes these defects? If it were only a matter of pointing to specific flaws of this story or that author, the answer would not be difficult. But I do not think these defects are an outgrowth of the intrinsic weaknesses of each writer; they are imposed from without. Perhaps revolutionary criticism is too much a part of the same influences shaping creative literature to be aware of what is wrong. Nevertheless, I believe the following are among the impressions which nearly every critical reader must get: that most proletarian writers are unconcerned with literary tradition and experiment; and that a lot of good material has been ruined by a vulgar, naive notion of what revolutionary literature should be.

It is easier to examine the second ailment, because it is more tangible. Specimens of it can be found in what might be called the "conversion" type of proletarian story.

### *The Conversion Ending*

SUCH stories usually follow a formula something like this: they describe how an unemployed person sinks down to the lowest depths of misery until, just a few lines or paragraphs before the end, he witnesses a street-corner meeting or demonstration, suddenly sees the "light," and leaps into action—just in time to meet the first rush of the cops. Tales of this sort are generally political testaments, written in the first flush of excitement with which their authors embrace the revolutionary movement. Usually, in their zeal, they make their characters act exactly the way they *wish* all people would act. This method of forcing the desires of the writer down the throat of his characters (or, to express the same thing in aesthetic terminology, this *subjective tendentiousness*) proves to be a boomerang. It produces idealized black-and-white abstractions, bearing little relation to the flesh and blood of life and realistic literature.

The conversion ending has become a revolutionary equivalent of the Cinderella formula: the protagonist is abruptly transformed from a passive, ignorant individual into a highly class-conscious activist, in the same way the homespun heroine is changed, with a wave of the wand, into a beautiful princess. This is so obvious a theme that it is almost always the first "idea" which the unimaginative person thinks of when he tries to write a proletarian story. But it is also used by writers who temporarily lose their sense of literary values.

Why do writers choose such a plot when they turn out their first proletarian efforts? The answer may not always be the same, but I believe the following is often the case. To begin with, these stories are confessions of faith, written by people whose experience has been largely what we term "middle-class." These writers are unfamiliar with the actual experience which make workers join the revolutionary movement. Many of them have never been in a militant demonstration and are ignorant of the complex feelings which it evokes. In most cases they have come to the movement through other paths, through the influences of certain people, through books and ideas. All this makes them lose their literary balance and turn out bad stories or ruin the material for good ones. An excellent example is Meridel Le Sueur's story, "Alone in Chicago," which must have been written before she possessed much knowledge of workers' battles. Contrast this with a fine piece of reportage like "I Was Marching"—written by the same author as a result of her direct participation in a Minneapolis strike—and you will understand what happens.

There is another reason for this conversion ending—which is, of course, only one symptom of the vulgar approach to proletarian literature. Often writers tack on this ending because they believe it is their revolutionary "duty" to do so, just as poets are inclined to end their first proletarian verses with political slogans. This is a repudiation of the whole creative process. It is generally committed by writers who think they are carrying out the slogan, "art is a weapon." They do live up to this slogan — but not in the way they imagine. Their stories *are* weapons in the class struggle—not for, but against the revolutionary movement! Such stories do not convince the sincere middle-class writer who reads them that the revolutionary movement has a positive effect upon the artist but rather a negative one. The literary reader is not impressed by their artistry but by their lack of it. Enemy critics are quick to pounce upon such writings and hold them up as representative samples of proletarian literature. In these stories the point of the sword is not directed at the enemy; it is pointed at us.

Fortunately, a very strong reaction against such writing has developed, particularly in the past year. At least at the center of the revolutionary cultural movement readers are

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demanding and writers are creating literary works of emotion and feeling rather than sociologic tracts masquerading as literature. In the main, both creative writer and audience have reached this stage of maturity in their own blundering way through their own trial and error experiences. And even today the majority of readers and writers continue to harbor primitive beliefs about proletarian literature which the minority has outgrown.

### The Defeatist Plot

THERE is still another reason for the conversion ending. Often stories are condemned because they do not deal with demonstrations or end on a militant note. Such stories, the creative writer is told, are not revolutionary; they are defeatist.

It seems to me that this type of criticism confuses the issue. The confusion consists in applying the term defeatist to the *plot* of a story, instead of to the general class-outlook of the author or to his particular psychological attitude toward life. Obviously a story may end with the defeat of workers and yet not be defeatist. The way in which the author sees his material and the emotional effect created upon the reader are not synonymous with the actions of the characters or the development of the plot. There are many examples of this in our young literature. One of the most recent instances is Erskine Caldwell's "Kneel to the Rising Sun." Although the Negro sharecropper in this story is betrayed by the white sharecropper and murdered by the landowners, the story is not defeatist. More directly than most stories of victorious class battles, this Caldwell tale arouses a deep, bitter hatred on the part of the reader for the exploiting class and the system it represents. It is not the material with which the author is concerned or the fate of his characters which determines the class meaning of the story; it is the interpretation of the author which determines that.

I think the entire concept of defeatism needs to be aired. The polar opposition which is set up between "militant" and "defeatist" writing is too schematic. As it is usually applied, it would exclude a great deal of human experience from proletarian literature. This is altogether contrary to our beliefs. Proletarian writing should not impose limitations upon the material suitable for art; what it does is to open new areas of experience—the lives and struggles of the masses—untouched by preceding literature. No sphere of human or natural relationships is closed to the proletarian story-teller; it is his outlook which interprets and reinterprets the material he finds. While the proletarian writer will naturally tend to find the most fertile source of art in working-class life and in stories of direct class action, it is his vision rather than his theme which distinguishes him from writers of another class.

Moreover, this way of looking at reality is not merely the attitude of *any* individual who sees life from the viewpoint of the proletariat. It is the class outlook of an individual whose medium of expression is literature. As such it must be related in some way to literary currents if it is to have value as part of the stream of culture.

The full meaning of this relationship is not appreciated by our story-tellers, many of whom are unconcerned with literary tradition and experiment. They tend to negate literary influences, to scorn past writing as "bourgeois." Their follies are the very opposite of those writers who imitate the manners of Lardner and Anderson and Hemingway as religiously as the proletarian writers avoid them.

They fall back upon a flat literalness, a thin sort of surface naturalism. They simply *report* incidents and experiences. There is little sifting of the stuff of reality which is a distinguishing feature of art. It may be objected that the very subject matter of proletarian fiction — usually immediate episodes which have had little chance to filter through the sensibility of the writer—militates against such writings. There is something to this argument. However, there are many examples of how contemporary life was fashioned into the substance of literature. The fault of many proletarian writers is that they do not strive deliberately enough to recreate in aesthetic terms the reality which they perceive. I have just read a novel by a new writer which does this; although it is based upon the events of the Pacific Coast strikes and must have been written after these events, the result is a triumph of re-creative talent.

As a matter of fact, this literalness is not peculiar to the proletarian story. It is characteristic of the contemporary short story, which is the most unliterary of literary forms. This is an outgrowth of the peculiar development of the short story in the United States.

### The Polished Twenties

AT least since the phenomenal success of O. Henry—or perhaps as far back as the Nineties—the American story became largely a commercialized product, made to order for pulps and smoothies. About the time of the war, the short story was partly successful in breaking away from the machine-made plots which were taught by fiction handbooks and correspondence courses. However, during the twenties, a number of talented writers deserted the literary short story; they succumbed to the lure of fat checks for ready-made tales that were stuck in between dentifrice ads and announcements of new model limousines. Commercial publications remained the only market. Most of the sincere men of letters turned away to experiment with new forms of the novel, where at least they didn't have to write according to the demands of the business offices of quality magazines.

But it was not only a matter of economics. Even those writers who worked conscientiously with the medium of the story found that liberation from the mechanical plot helped very little. During the twenties the short story became more and more polished — and sounded more and more hollow. As early as 1927, one reviewer pointed out that in spite of technical excellence, its lack of direction and the triviality of material made the contemporary tale empty—empty because it was removed from social reality.

In the awakening of the American masses to this reality lies the significant content that can revitalize the American short story. The background of the past five years is studded with such material and proletarian writers are beginning to deal with it.

### Proletarian Story Tellers

ALTHOUGH the general run of proletarian fiction is still rather unimpressive, there are a few stories which indicate the rich potentialities of this new form. Some of them are Joseph Kalar's "Collar," which mirrors the rust-like emotions of a boss' lackey on his last legs; Louis Lerman's "A Class in English," which creates warm, wine-like qualities in its picture of Italian workers in the unemployed councils; Albert Maltz's "Man on a Road," which shows how easily the story can adapt itself to immediate events. Joseph Wilson's "Education of a Texan" is an interesting yarn of flesh and blood characters; it tells how a good Party worker was cured of his white chauvinism through the actions of a Negro comrade; and the story does not end with some heroic battle, but with a three-handed pinochle game between the two characters and the narrator!

One of the few proletarian writers who has experimented with the short story is Jack Balch. In "Take a Number, Take a Seat," he has put down the thoughts of a class-conscious individual in a relief agency, in a sort of stream of consciousness manner. In "We Is Brothers" he has caught a few episodes ("How it feels to be a nigger?" the jobless Negro says to the unemployed white man) which light up the essential unity of black and white workers. In "Telephone Call" he has drawn a poignant sketch in less than five hundred words. "St. Louis Idyll" is a variety of the conversion story which has the fresh tang of Hemingway's early work. Unfortunately, some of Balch's tales are cluttered with dialect and slang that get in the reader's way, and a swirling narrative manner that is sometimes baffling. Once he resolves the rough spots in his writing, Balch should emerge as a significant prose artist.

Only two other proletarian writers are deliberately experimenting with the short story. Louis Mamet's "The Machine," which deals with a skilled worker who is cheated out of his pension, is done in a combined drama and fiction form. Other stories of his which are based on the same device — imposing other media, such as the newspaper or the diary, upon fiction — are not so effective. John Broome has an original manner and a good ear for dialect, but his writing at present lacks discipline.

Nelson Algren does not tinker with the form of the short story, but he is equipped

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with a sensibility that is unique in recent American literature and it freshens the material which he touches. Most of his stories, dealing with guys on the bum in the Southwest, have been worked into his first novel, *Somebody in Boots*.

Saul Levitt's chief contribution is his feeling for material which is at the very center of typical social experience. A long story of his, "My Kid Brother," which describes the thoughts of a shopkeeper at the time his brother joins an unemployment march to Washington, is a little epic of the lives of lower-class Jewish families.

Each of Levitt's stories is what has been traditionally called a slice of life. Other writers like Sanora Babb, Peter Quince, Alfred Morang, John C. Rogers, Fred R. Miller, Warren C. Huddlestone—all concerned with different *regional* materials—create the same effect. However, most proletarian stories are, like other stories, *scraps* rather than slices of reality. For this reason it is very difficult for short fiction to give a sense of the complexity of life which social writing demands. Yet there are themes which can give the effect of looking through a knothole at a whole field of social experience. The short story can be, as Edith Wharton has said, "a shaft driven through the heart of experience."

Ben Field chooses much bigger chunks of reality, which he hews out of agrarian life. In stories like "Cow"—the tale of a hefty Red farmhand whose accidental death is made into a genuine tragedy—"Sheep Dip" and "The New Housekeeper," Field has put the modern poor farmer and farmhand into American literature. His story in this issue of THE NEW MASSES has the quality of all his narratives—a sense of *human-ness* which is almost a peculiarly proletarian trait. It has seemed to me for some time past that Field is a neglected figure; a volume of his best yarns and sketches would grace any season's publishing list.

Represented in this short-story supplement are some of the authors who are deeply concerned with proletarian fiction. If all of them work more scrupulously with their craft, if they attempt to create narratives with the quality of literature rather than of oratory or journalism, if they acquire an intimate sense of the movement of the revolutionary masses —then they will help to restore the American short story as a significant literary form, then they will carry forward the tradition of the short story in American letters.

If most of this essay seems negative in tone —if it seems to be *defeatist*—this arises out of the conviction that certain forces are stifling the growth of proletarian fiction; and that once these obstacles are removed, the proletarian short story will emerge as a significant form of literature. I hope that no one will interpret this conclusion as a conversion ending!

# The Rabbit

## BEN FIELD

THE RABBIT leaped up in the air in a somersault. It flopped back on the grass, digging its legs into its belly as if it had a bite. Blood came out of its mouth.

Eve rushed to the farmhouse where Theresa was preparing dinner. "Mother, a rabbit, a rabbit. The cow killed a rabbit."

They hurried to the pasture where Eve minded the cows because there were no fences. The twins paddled after them.

Theresa touched it with her bare foot. The big jackrabbit lay stiff, dead. The twin boys squatted round it, their elbows dug into their puffed bellies, staring at it solemnly, hungrily.

Eve kicked up her dress. She flashed her skinny legs down the dirt road to the haylot. Young Lou was raking. She flagged him with her hands. "We got a rabbit. The cow killed a rabbit."

Young Lou never got excited. He looked off while she chattered how it had all happened as she lay in the grass making believe she was on a white magic ship in a far away ocean. He spat and stared at the sky. Time to knock off work anyway and go feed one's face. He unhitched the team. He watered the horses and stuffed the mangers with hay. With a spear of redtop in his mouth he strolled down to the pasture.

He picked up the jack by its long ears. He weighed it. "Ain't big enough to stop a scratch."

Theresa had both hands hung on her hips like rags. "Exaggerating again, Louie?"

"Sure, it ain't. Why, Mother, you could pick it out of your nose and not feel the difference. There's jackrabbits out West. Them Kansas Warhorse Jacks, big enough to chase hyenas. They been eating the stones in the West's graveyards during the drouth."

Young Lou went over and patted the old cow which kept on grazing. "Good work, old girl." He let Jumbo, the dog, sniff the rabbit. Jumbo with the black patch over one eye and the huge ears like pockets was Young Lou's shadow. "All right, Partner, one snootful. You'll get all the bones, mark my words."

He flung the jack over his shoulder. The rest of the family followed him.

They were too excited to eat their dinner. Lou took the rabbit and hung it up on a hook on the kitchen wall. It hung with its head down. "That takes the heat out." The blood dripped on the floor.

The twins made faces when they saw they must have potato soup again. They blubbered for rabbit. Lou had to promise he would skin the rabbit in the evening. They might have it for supper. Then he set his teeth and shoveled away at the soup. The other children "followed the master."

As Theresa Benson ate, her neckbone showed out like a knuckle. At last, they would have a change with the rabbit. Potatoes, potatoes, potatoes. She was at her wit's end. Last year they had a good crop, that's all they had. What good did it do? Everybody had a good crop. No one could sell to make expenses. The winter was so cold half the potatoes froze. They had to keep for the table the frozen ones that tasted so bitter. And this spring it had been so wet the seed potatoes had rotted away in the red shell and clay that wouldn't let the water through. Drouth or rain, it was just the ends of the same stick.

Both of the small boys had sneaked off, gotten under the rabbit to get the blood to drip on their hands. She had to sing out at them to cut it out, go finish their soup.

Even Young Lou, who was such a sport, had burst out once, "We've got so much potatoes it comes out of the ears." Taller than his father already, like a beanpole, resembling his father in that hairy sturdy neck in which all the stubbornness and determination seemed to be planted.

The twins started squawking. A fly had dropped into Lou's soup. Always at dinner Eve kept the flies away which came in through the broken screens and windows. Spending most of the time alone in the pasture, the child had been driven into herself. She lived in a world of make-believe, imagining herself at every meal a queen's maiden with a golden fan and not a ragged little farm girl with a flour-sack towel. And in spite of the twins' outcry, Eve continued fanning the rabbit.

Young Lou shrugged his shoulders. "Ain't nothing." He picked up the fly. He was ready to swallow the fly to show the two kids spunk.

"Louie!"

"It's only a flyweight, Mother." He crossed his legs and picked his teeth, then suddenly jumped up. "The work ain't waiting for no man."

Theresa hurriedly nursed the baby. Then Eve took the baby out into the pasture with her. The twins found sticks and paraded up and down in front of the kitchen. They shooed Jumbo away from the rabbit. The rabbit hung with a sheet of The Farmers' Weekly around it to keep the flies off.

Out in the lot Theresa loaded, Young Lou

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pitched. Last year immediately after the arrest of Lou Benson, leader of the milk strike, some of the farmers in the Protective Association had helped with husking corn and cutting wood. But now all of them, small farmers, had their hands full. Some had been evicted. The new neighbors were strangers whom the insurance companies and cow-jockeys had moved in in an attempt to girdle and cut off the Benson farm from the rest of the country.

Young Lou made the hayseed fly. He did not pitch up birdsnests, but whole cocks of hay till his face was like a blood blister. And pitching off in the barn, he gave his mother the easier of the jobs, detailing one of the kids to come into the haymow to help. The other stood guard at the door to protect the rabbit. Lou timed himself with his dad's old turnip and found he had improved his unloading speed by half a minute.

After the last load was in, Theresa sat down to cool herself before nursing the baby. During spring plowing she had heated herself one afternoon and nursed the baby right after. The baby had gotten the colic. They had spent so much on the doctor they couldn't buy even a single peck of feed for the stock. They could have used the money The Labor Defense wanted to send them. But Theresa had written at the beginning that the family was getting along, that the money should better be used for Scottsboro, Mooney and the Gallup miners.

Young Lou did the milking. The twins could now go into the barn with Eve. Their mother sat in the kitchen with an eye on the rabbit. They pulled up bunches of fresh grass to feed the old cow. They patted her. Eve cried to Lou he was squeezing her too hard. Then she wondered whether there was any way of teaching the old cow to go after rabbits. Young Lou had trained Jumbo to do many tricks. Couldn't he train the cow?

Lou pursed his lips and spat into the drop. Sure, he could do it. But he was too busy now. The corn must be drilled before dad came. Suddenly he blurted, "Eve, when in hell did we have meat last?"

Eve crinkled her eyes. She couldn't remember. She could make believe it was at dinner.

The twins puffed themselves up angrily. There was no meat at dinner.

But Eve could remember when they had pounds and pounds of butter. It was right before the strike. The milk dealer came in a shiny car with a tub of butter. Dad had chased him out of the house. He had thrown the tub after him. The tub had split. The kids had buried their hands in the butter lying in the cowyard and gobbled it up like candy.

The twins helped carry the pails to the house. Lou and Eve dragged the milk can into the milkhouse and put it into a tub of well water.

First thing they did inside the house was to take the rabbit down from the hook. Young Lou pulled at the fur, examined the rabbit from all sides. "How about leaving it for tomorrow?"

*William Sanderson*

Eve sniffed. The twins bawled out with one voice like a double-barreled shotgun, "No."

"I got a good reason for it, kids. I think we can get old man Wormser to come over skin it for us. We ain't got enough experience. We'll tear it. We won't get all the meat's on it. We want to make the skin into a pair of gloves for baby."

Eve said, "Sure, for baby." The twins looked at each other. After all, there might not be so much meat. And Lou reminded them that Dad had written them from jail to be "on the left flank and right flank of baby to give him a good start. Then he'll shoot up like a weed and turn out to be a good scrapper." And so it was decided as Young Lou proposed. And the rabbit was hung up in the cool milk house to keep.

After supper, Eve and the kids went to sleep. Young Lou drove bareback the big black horse three miles to the postbox. Sometimes there was no mail for weeks. Right after Benson's arrest they began opening newspapers and magazines. Just as after the arrest all the storekeepers in the village had been forced to stop giving credit to the family. And the heads of the American Legion had written a letter threatening them if they didn't pack up and get the hell out. Young Lou called the family to a council of war. He answered the letter pronto. He pointed out they had a right to stay here. This was still America. They were Americans. And if the Legion tried to come down he would shoot and not at the feet either. It didn't matter to Young Lou that the rifle was broken and there wasn't a single bullet on the farm. He would show them. Everybody had signed the letter. They had made marks like chicken feet for the twins and the baby.

This time there was a letter. From Dad. Young Lou whooped and galloped the horse topspeed through the dew-soaked fields. His mother was sitting near the kerosene lamp patching clothes.

> Dear Grass Widow, I've a hunch I'll be out in a couple of days. They won't let me know definitely. They think some of our friends will come down with a brass band. Kiss Eve and the three young men of the family. Kiss Lou. If he won't allow it, pound hell out of him.

They read the letter again and again. Suddenly something flashed down on it like a drop of white fire. The word "brass" budged and spread. Lou jerked up. His mother was crying noiselessly, her eyes shut, her thin bloodless lips quivering. She buried her face in her hands with the cut stringy fingers. For a moment he himself felt as if his face were in a tightening nosetwitch, a flood so strong inside him that it would blow his eyes out. He ground his fist against the table and then patted his mother, patted the hunched shaking narrow shoulders.

She got up and wiped her eyes. "I'm sorry, son."

"Aw nuts, Mother. Now you get to bed. Beat it." He pushed her upstairs with the letter.

He went out to the stable to see how the horses were getting along. He gave the old cow an extra handful of feed. He sat down on the sagging porch, Jumbo's moist nose in his hands. He stared up at the stars. He felt terribly hungry. But there was just enough bread for tomorrow's breakfast. Last week Wormser had given him a slab of plug tobacco. It was good when a fellow was hungry. But the stuff made his head spin and made him vomit. He tore off a piece, chewed and spat. In the end he had to lie down. He vomited and felt hungrier. He stumbled into the milkhouse to look at the rabbit. Then he went to bed.

The twins were up at cockcrow to inspect the rabbit. Lou did the chores and drove down in the wagon to the milk platform. Wormser wasn't there. His cans were. He was glad of that. He told the kids he couldn't find Wormser. They should wait until Dad comes, give him a real surprise.

Theresa, nursing the baby, said: "They've been waiting patiently for the rabbit, son. Dad may not come yet a while."

"Yes," crossed the twins. Eve was undecided, closing her eyes to see whether her make-believe was working.

Lou started pouting at the twins, "Blubber faces. Dad in jail for us. He's been living on bread and water. And that's the way you treat him. You ought to have a cowflop for your dinner and not Dad." He stalked out of the kitchen.

Between the soya beans and the sudan grass there were a couple of acres which Young Lou had plowed for corn. The field was at the other end of the farm which ran long and thin as a needle along the road. Young Lou got the

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big black horse and the small brown mare and drove out to the field. The harness, patched and wired. The lever of the harrow, rusty, jammed. Bare to the waist, he jerked legs over the clods. Jumbo ran around sniffing. Somewhere a full bee hummed like a field telephone. The sun drew blood and water. The horses soaped. Jerking off the harrow, he hitched to the drag.

Eva danced down the road. "We voted, Lou. We voted 'nanimously to wait for Dad. Even baby voted. Mother says only we got to skin the rabbit and keep it in the milk house cool. She says it'll spoil maybe."

"All right. Beat it back to work."

He whistled to the team. A scythe rang out sharply from the line fence. The thicket stirred. It was the new neighbor.

The flies were bad. The big horse caught his leg in the bellyband. The bellyband snapped like thread. Lou squatted under the belly of the horse. Turning round, there was the neighbor looking over his shoulder. Together they patched the bellyband.

The neighbor said the drag was too small.

Young Lou said the neighbor should be using a bush hook instead of a scythe.

The neighbor said mebbe so, the sapling's tough, but fences should be trimmed with whatever you got, good fences make good neighbors.

Lou said Dad said fences make bad neighbors.

The neighbor scratched his head. "Been here only a couple months and just beginning to get my bearings."

"They hear about us even out West. Since Dad's cooped up, things ain't a-humming. He'll be back soon. We had the best Sears Roebuck sale in the country, sold a horse for a nickel, a flock of cows for a dime and a raft of machinery for two bits. It was for old man Wormser. Then we give it back to him for ninety-nine years. We ain't going to take no old Sears Roebuck catalogues and leave them in the backhouse. We're going to wipe up the bankers with them."

The neighbor's eyes twinkled but he said nothing.

"If you was in Dad's boots, wouldn't you a-done what he done? It's for the farmers, ain't it?"

Young Lou pulled out his plug tobacco, took a bite and offered the neighbor a bite. He told him about the rabbit they were holding up for Dad. And could he come over to skin it? The neighbor, lean as a buttonhook with old stubble on his face, hesitated, grinned and then burst out laughing. He clapped Lou on the shoulder. "Why not, my lad? Why not?"

Dinner time each mounted a horse and they raced down to the house. The neighbor said, "How dee, ma'am," and took off his hat to mother. He looked around. Then he took the jack, felt it and said it should have been skinned immediately. Warm, skin slips off like silk. He slit the rabbit and pulled the skin off slowly like a glove. He chopped off the legs. He opened the belly and took out the guts carefully. He threw the guts to Jumbo who wolfed them up in one gulp. One of the twins yelped for the little red liver. The other suddenly grabbed the gall like a small grape and shoved it into his mouth.

Before they could do anything, it had burst in his mouth. He started bawling his head off. He frothed at the mouth. He beat at his mothers' legs. The neighbor grabbed him and forced water into his mouth. They held him head down and then gave him dirt to eat. He turned purple, couldn't catch his breath. They pounded him on the back. He sat on the ground, bawling and tearing at his tongue.

At last the rabbit was cleaned. Mother said, "There ain't so much to him now."

The neighbor stroked the thighs. "Quite some meat. Look at the wolves."

"That's the assbones."

"Louie!"

"Mother, us farmers ain't old ladies no more."

"You're a caution." She reached over and pinched him on the chest.

The skinned rabbit was locked up in the milk house.

They treated the neighbor to dinner—potatoes with salt, bread, and good Adam's ale from the well. Lou rode back with him to the field. The neighbor helped sow the corn. The boy was proud of having made such a contact. Contact to Young Lou meant not only the building up of the organization. It also meant the signal that the airplane was ready to wing out into the air. Both meanings were bound up together for him.

End of the week slid round. There was no news from Benson. Young Lou would have held out longer but it was decided to have the rabbit for Sunday dinner. All morning long the whole family crowded the kitchen. Young Lou, finally ashamed of his weakness, went to clean out the stables. Theresa fried the rabbit with flour in a large pan. Eve held the fork like a wand. The twins hung over the stove working their snub noses, fretting that the frying was making the pieces too small.

After a long long while their mother took the pan off the stove. She put the pieces in a bowl and covered the bowl with a plate. She looked up at the clock. Jumbo started a terrific barking on the porch.

A man was coming up the road. He made the turn and leaned against the shed, dusty and tired. Eve swooped out and flew across the yard. It was Benson. They rushed him pell mell. He crushed the twins to himself. "My beanbellies, my little peckers." Kissed Eve on the lips, then on the hand. "Dear

*William Sanderson*

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little lady." He squared off and traded punches with Lou. "Doddarn it, how the lad's winged out." They swarmed around him, pulling and pinching him, hanging on to his neck while he kept patting their mother on the back as she smiled and wiped her eyes with her hands.

The twins jabbered about the rabbit. Eve danced on her toes and told how it had happened. The cow was there. She lay in the grass. Lou spoke about the neighbor, a swell fellow, who had done the skinning.

Barking, Jumbo had raced ahead of them. He crashed into the kitchen. They bunched on the porch, laughing. Then Jumbo darted out of the kitchen and slunk across the yard. They went inside. The bowl lay shattered on the floor. Every bit of rabbit had disappeared.

The twins flopped on the floor into the grease. One started banging with his heels and head. The other threshed around, bawling.

Young Lou dashed out on the porch. "Jumbo, partner."

Jumbo cringed in the yard, his tongue dripping. Lou hurled himself across the yard. He cornered the dog and flailed him with both fists. The dog yelped, leaped at the boy, bit him. It shot across the yard, disappearing in the pasture.

Benson dropped on a chair. An overwhelming weariness swept over him. "Come on, kids. We'll get more rabbits where this one comes from."

But the twins kept on crying. The baby woke up. It wouldn't nurse. It squalled with them. Their mother ran up. "Will you shut up, you brats?" and slapped them. Eve sat down at the table obediently. But all the make-believe in the world couldn't help her. The tears ran down her nose.

Benson held on to the table. Again the blood inside him seemed seeping away as if nothing could stop it. A year of the iron cell, the beating in the prison shop, months on the iron cot, his guts rotting with the ulcer he had gotten during the feverish milk strike and eviction fights. The iron seemed to have gotten into his teeth. He stared at the cold potato soup. It looked like tears and sweat.

He said, "There was a coal miner in the cell next to mine. Swell chap. Fine contact. Tell me more about yours, son." He leaned back in his chair and smiled.

Such talk always made the boy hot, always made his eyes glow. He could bet on Young Lou in a moment of weakness.

But the boy wouldn't look up. It wasn't the rabbit. It was Jumbo whom he had brought up since a pup. He smeared his bleeding hand across his eyes and said nothing.

Benson remembered that the farmers would drop in to see him during the afternoon. The work must be picked up swiftly where it had been dropped. He looked at his family. He sighed and shook his weariness off. Even in this he had to show the way. He picked up a spoon and started eating.

# Big Hands

## LEN ZINBERG

I PUT one leg across the other. Then after a minute or so I folded my hand under my head and uncrossed my legs. Then I moved my hips so that I wouldn't get a crease in my can from the boards in the bench. But I couldn't sleep. I could see by the gray sky that it was still early morning and I pulled my coat over my jaw, thought about a blanket and shut my eyes. But still I couldn't sleep. And it wasn't a very cold night either and the park bench was large too. So I lay there thinking why I couldn't sleep and why I felt sort of nervous. Then suddenly I knew what was wrong—somebody was watching me. That's what woke me up.

I turned around and sure enough there was a tall gangling dame with a little pad in her hand, sitting on the opposite bench and sketching me. I sat up, kind of dizzy like, and she said: "Oh! Why did you move? You were such a splendid subject."

I thought to myself: splendid subject? Splendid hell, you mean hungry subject! But what the hell, I figured I might just as well lay down again and let her finish her picture. The park was empty and cold and there was no one to talk to anyway. I was just about to lay down when she said: "Here I get up early, very early in the morning, to sketch you men and now you've almost spoiled my picture." The way she said that sounded like one of those dames who gives you a hand-out and then talks in a sugary voice as though she was a great fat god who had put the world right with her lousy few pennies. I sat up, my head was beginning to clear from the sleep, and looked at her. She was tall and had kind of a pretty face, in fact she would have been a nice piece if she wasn't so thin. She was dressed in what she must have thought were odd clothes and they looked expensive. You could see she was one of those Village hot-air bags that call themselves artists. I thought: the hell with you, sister, and I sat up straight and just stared at her and her small breasts.

She kept right on drawing even though I was sitting up and after watching her for a few minutes I got to wondering what I looked like on paper and after awhile I got up and walked over to her. She got up and it seemed to me that she backed away a little as she asked: "Do you want to see the picture?"

I said: "Sure. I used to have a couple of swell original drawings hanging around my room. You know, I once had a room."

She handed me the pad and there was a picture of a guy sleeping on a bench. I said: "Is that me?"

"Why of course." And she got red in the face.

Well, she didn't have my face in as my back was toward her, but there was nothing in the picture that looked like me. It was just a guy sleeping in ragged clothing; one hole was even shaded to make it stand out. You could see the holes in my soles and she even put in the torn shoe laces with each little knot. The tear in my crushed hat could be plainly seen and every damn spot on my suit stood out like a ten-dollar bill.

She asked me if I liked it.

I looked at the hands. I got big hands, long and very strong. The boys back in the shop used to say I had the best hands for a mechanic they had ever seen. Strong enough to get a good hold on any wrench and long and slender enough to go down into small holes. I remember once we got a racing car in the shop and I was the only guy that could get his fingers up past the crankshaft and into the small cylinders. I looked hard at the drawing and finally saw that she had made my hands rough and dumpy looking, like the hands of a pug who had broken all his knuckles.

She said: "Well, do you like it?"

I asked her: "What's the idea of making all those holes so large and making them stand out so plain? And all those stains?"

"That's for color—atmosphere."

"And why did you make my hands look like a couple of hams?"

She looked at the drawing. "Oh, I had to distort them a little—for atmosphere, too."

"A little? Listen, sister, if you were going to use your imagination, why didn't you stay home and draw? Look at this hand," and I held out my hand in front of her face. "This is the hand of a born mechanic. See those long narrow fingers? See how strong that hand is, what a grip those fingers can get? Take a good look at it. It's the finest mechanic's hand you'll ever see."

She was a little scared as she said: "Yes, it is strong. Very strong and nice. But you see I'm trying to portray a man—a—a man, sleeping on a park bench with the brown Fall leaves all around him and I have to make—"

Then I see what is wrong with the picture, she made me look like a bum! A tramp! I guess my voice must have sounded tough when I said: "You mean you drew me as a bum. You came out—so very early—to draw the poor bums sleeping in the park, didn't you? Didn't you? You had to distort my hands, but you couldn't distort my clothes—that wouldn't be the kind of color you're looking for. You had to put in every little hole and stain. Since when are holes more interesting than a pair of strong hands?"

She walked backwards a few steps and

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looked around the empty park, for a cop I suppose, and said: "Please give me my pad. I have to go now."

But I was sore and held on to it. Not knowing the difference between an unemployed worker and a bum! It made me sore as hell. Me, a skilled mechanic with perfect mechanic's hands and she makes me out like a bum with a couple of broken mitts. The more I thought about it the more steamed I got and she must have seen it in my face because she turned and started to run, running in that funny awkward jerky way that a dame that isn't used to running uses.

I took her pad and tore it into small pieces and the smaller the pieces got the madder I got. Then I threw the pieces after her and shouted so she heard me: "Here's your goddamn picture of a bum, you stupid bitch!"

She kept on running toward Fifth Avenue and I sat down and rubbed my fists against each other and felt of my strong fingers. Only I felt so full of energy that I couldn't sit down and I got up and walked around. And I wanted to do something more than just tear up paper. I felt so damn full of fight that I began walking up and down fast, opening and shutting my strong hard fists, hoping that something would happen because I felt so fighting mad I knew I could lick the world.

# Case History

## JOHN MORTIMER

WHAT difference does it make what Om Petru looked like? Would you ask how a dog looked? He was a man, like another, a beast with long red muscles that curved and shone, and swathed and bandaged his white bones.

In one of the waves of restlessness that swept the poor out of the old country into poverty here, he came to America. In a month his money ran low though he ate only one meal a day and never had meat. And just as he thought he must hit people on the head to get a few coins for food, he met Ondra from the village.

It was easy, said Ondra. In New York, all the window-cleaners were Polaks and Petru had only to go to the boss and ask for a job.

You were glad to get Petru. Polaks were dumb and strong. They worked uncomplainingly and when they got in trouble for fighting while they were drunk, you bailed them out; and when they married you gave them a little more money and in a few years slept with their wives while they were working.

So Petru was told he could begin in the morning. The window-cleaner's season was coming on; they had to have a few extra men around. What "season"? Ha ha! The season when they "come down," when snow and sleet and frozen rain coat the window-sills with ice, when a slip and sudden pull of a heavy body on the safety-belt will jerk a hook out of the weather-rotted sash and send a Polak down upon the pavement or the heads of the passersby.

They gave him a brush with long soft bristles, a bucket, a squeegee, a chamois and a safety belt. For a few hours they set him to cleaning store-windows and he learned quickly. The truth of the matter is that there wasn't much to learn: a half-pail of water, a douse with the brush, the squeegee in sweeps from top to bottom with a flick of the wrist to shake the water off and the chamois to rub the pane dry. It was just a knack and in two hours even that ox of a Petru had it. The squeegee went into a leather loop on his belt, the brush went in the pail, the pail hooked over one shoulder and with a cigarette in his mouth Petru was ready for the next job.

You laughed at how easy it was, didn't you, Petru? You began to see what they meant by the tales of gold in the streets. Well, that afternoon they had something else in store for you. The boss came to the clothing store whose windows you were cleaning:

"How is it going, Petru?" he said in Polish.

"Easy," said you, grinning.

"How would you like to go up this afternoon?" he said.

"Up where?" said you, puzzled.

He pointed to the windows of an office building, slanting towards the sky.

"Up there to clean windows."

You didn't look any too sure, Petru, and the boss who was watching closely, noticed.

"That's what I hired you for," he said. "Only breaking you in on this."

"I'll try it," said you, realizing why they were paying that twenty dollars a week.

So there you were, Petru, higher above the earth than you would have dreamed possible in your Poland of one-story huts, frightened for the first time in your life. You knew that if you fell, the pavement would explode your blood and bones like pulp of a rotten orange. But you go out. You brace your feet as far apart as you can. The muscle of your anus opens and the fear of that expectant void enters your bowels. But you stay there. You must eat and in New York the only thing a Polak can do is clean windows. You hold on to the top sash of the window with drowning fingers. Fergus laughs at you and lets you shiver for a few minutes. Finally he shows you how each end of the safety-belt fastens to a hook in the sash of the window.

"Stop shaking, you fool," he says. "See, you can't fall."

You sigh with relief when you feel the broad thick belt rasp your spine and slap your kidneys. You can't fall, think you. You can't fall! One day the weather will finish eating the wood or rusting the metal that holds the hooks. Or maybe the water that you will work in from now on: the water that will gray the flesh under your nails and thicken them like an animal's claws so that you can barely cut them with a knife—maybe, one day, the water will rot your belt through and send you down to cause what havoc you'll never know.

PETE, Petru, you get so, after a little while, that you can stand there, high above the ants and beetles, without thought, a disease you never suffered from for long. You stand there. The wind tears a cap from your head or a rag from your shoulder, and stiffens the blood in your cheeks to a permanent red. Like a child, you think yourself immortal. Others fall: Ondra, from a window alongside of you. He is in a hurry one day and doesn't hook himself in. A rag slips from his shoulder and he reaches out for it. Just as you turn to say something to him, he falls stiffly back like a toy soldier. You try to shout something but the words congeal in your throat so you can't breathe and your eyes shut of themselves as Ondra turns over and over and the noise of his striking the ground mounts to your ears with the screams of the people amongst whom he has burst. You want to stop, to go inside, to quit for good. You cannot. The beast clawed at the waterhole must still return to drink. The fit passes. You are not to feel it again, for Ondra was your friend and you are never to make another.

Unlike the rest, Petru, you aren't to fall. You are marked for a fate that takes a little time.

You married. You, Pete, with your straight back and your flat belly! You knew she was for you the moment you saw her on her hands and knees over the scrubbing-brush, with some lady's cast-off silk dress spanning her spreading hams. There were times she could say no, those early mornings in the office where no one would come in for hours yet. She would take her time while you rushed to get through and she was strong enough, that woman, to keep you off

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when she wanted to. So you stood up with her before a priest and afterwards you took her whenever you felt like.

The war came, but the bands and flags meant nothing to you who knew all about wars from Europe. For a few years, you made good money, and then it happened:

Fergus orders the men to lay off for a week. He wants to force more money from his customers and the other bosses have agreed not to go after his business. But the union tells the men to keep on working and collect the money for themselves. Three days go by and Petru appears at the same buildings he has worked in for years, pleased at getting all the money for himself even though it only be for a few weeks. But one morning at four o'clock, as Petru waits for a watchman to unlock an outer door for him, an open car draws up at the curb.

"Hey you," calls a man from the driver's seat. "Is your name Petru?"

"Yes," says Petru.

"Well come here a minute," says the man. "I have something for you."

He had something for you, all right. As you walked up to the car looking at the man who sat behind the wheel, someone leaned out from the rear seat and cracked you on the skull with a length of unwrapped lead pipe. A few seconds later, the watchman opened the door to find you lying with your head over the curb and the gutter neatly conveying your blood to the sewer a few feet away.

PETRU, you're done for now. You're dead as a mackerel, but you'll continue to breathe for a few years and they won't be able to bury you. You lie there. You are the young interne's first ambulance case. He is only a few months out of school. He bandages you hastily and clumsily. On the way back to the hospital, while the nervous traffic freezes at the ambulance gong, he stares at you, Peru, stretched out on the pallet. His memory produces automatically as though at an examination (thank God, no more examinations): *severe concussion: patient lies in a state of complete muscular relaxation; extremities cold, skin pale and cold, pulse slow and weak, breathing rapid and irregular.*

The interne breaks into a cold sweat. He has a feeling that you are going to die in the wagon, Petru. It will be his fault. He will have done something wrong. He turns over everything in his new bag. He finally discovers a phial of ammonia, puts a few drops on a dirty handkerchief and holds it to your nose. You look very still as he fingers your pulse, but he is too nervous to feel anything. He is frightened. But meanwhile the ambulance has crossed on 40th Street to Second Avenue and turns right. In three minutes you are at the hospital. There is no room in the accident ward and they place you in the corridor.

For three days you are delirious, Petru. You make a nice spectacle for the people passing by you in the hall. Several times you try to get up. You can see by the light at the strange window with glass in it, that the hour is late; you have overslept and you must help your father in the fields. You are still so strong that it takes several orderlies to hold you down. You are considered a great nuisance. Then suddenly you are better. You recognize your wife and kids, but you are puzzled at what brought you to bed and are never to recall the attack.

In a few days, they discharge you from the hospital and you go back to work. The young interne is wild with anger: *for many weeks after a grave concussion, the patient must be kept away from business and watched, because of the possibility of abscess of the brain arising and because of the liability of such patients to develop hysteria, neurasthenia or insanity.* The interne is told to shut up for a young pup who has just passed his State Board's. He begs for X-rays, examination: *if signs of compression arise, it is best to trephine, as the compressing agent may be a clot (see page 786). If inflamation arises some surgeons will not trephine but most regard it as wise and proper . . . to incise the scalp and inspect the bone. In any severe concussion of the brain with contusion of the scalp the surgeon should at once incise the scalp and inspect the bone.* One of the house-doctors, a "clinical worker," makes a swift examination, feels Petru's thick skull with his fingers, and looks around at the young interne:

"Listen," he says. "The man can walk out of here and we need the bed."

From the hospital, Petru, you go right to the office. Fergus looks away from you.

Your eyes are crossed. Your movements are uncertain. But Fergus is glad to make peace with his conscience and he takes you on again. He even pays you for the ten days you were out! He just told them to threaten you, Petru. He didn't know it was going to turn out this way. So there, Petru, everything is okay now.

BUT after a few days, Annie knew that everything wasn't all right, didn't she, Petru? You broke into murderous tempers and beat her until she ran screaming to the neighbors for help. And your kids knew there was something wrong with their old man, didn't they, Petru? when you lay cursing for hours because you couldn't sleep. And finally, the men you worked with noticed that you seemed a little queer and complaints came in that you had forgotten to show up at places where for ten years you'd cleaned windows every day except Sunday. You'd wander vaguely around the streets with your pail over one shoulder and your squeegee in your belt, until one of the men found you and brought you in. Fergus considered firing you, but he finally teamed you with another man who went from job to job with you and shared the work.

Ah Petru, the bastards teased you. You whistled and sang no more, but gazed stupidly at your own unsubstantial reflection in one window-pane after another until the day was through. At five o'clock, when they were all checking out at the time-clock in Fergus' office, one would wink at the rest and say:

"Well, Pete, how do you feel today?"

"Pretty good. Say, you know Ondra came down this morning?"

"What d'ye mean. Ondra was killed five years ago."

"I know, but he got better. Today he fell again."

"Well, how did he make out this time?" They would all laugh.

"Oh, he was done-for the minute he hit the ground. I guess I'll go over to the hospital and see how he is."

"Didn't you say he was done-for?"

"Yeah, I went by before. They say he ain't so good."

"How did it happen, Pete?"

"Oh he was too much in a hurry to hook himself in and he slipped. I said to myself as he went down: 'You can take your time now, Ondra. There ain't no rush where you're goin'.' Yeah, I went around to the undertakers and he was so smashed they covered him up in the box." Petru grinned crookedly. "He didn't wait for no elevator, did he!"

It was beautifully, relentlessly logical: *concussion: the entire nature may change. It may not be for weeks or months, but it finally manifests itself in . . . irritability, violent rage, forgetfulness as to recent events, Korsakov's psychosis.* NOTHING REQUIRING MENTAL OR PHYSICAL EFFORT CAN BE DONE. *There are headaches, insomnia, depression, lassitude and* VERTIGO.

It struck you one day as you were cleaning the windows of a forty-sixth floor office in a skyscraper. Everything looked dim. You saw red and black flashes of light. There was a roaring in your ears. Then with an awful slowness, the building swam under you and the corner of your eye caught the distant street heaving horribly towards you. You clung by your nails to the cracks in the closed window. You managed to pull the window up and as you unfastened one of the hooks to get inside, the building fell away from you like a dead weight to be brought up with a jerk by the hook still fast to your belt. And there you were in the sky, supporting that enormous weight at your middle. But suddenly the fit passed and your paralyzed stomach flung a stream of vomit into an icy wind which tore it to shreds and dispersed it. Your bowels emptied into your clothes. You hung there until your partner noticed the broad belt straining from the window-hook into the void. You were pulled up and dragged, stinking, to a wash room to clean the revolting mess that was your person. Then you were brought to Fergus.

"Pete," said Fergus, "we're going to put you someplace where you can't fall far."

And they took away the squeegee and the leather belt and the brush and the chamois, and they gave you a mop.

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IT takes you a long time to understand that you aren't a window-cleaner any more. You are a porter, who goes from store to store and office to office and washes toilets and floors and empties spitoons and polishes brass and then has someone sign the book to show the job is done. Your body shrinks, keeping pace with your final degradation. Your skin suddenly becomes so hypersensitive with multiple neuritis that when you fumble into your clothes, the rough cloth seems to claw your flesh with a thousand nails. Then like a leper, you can feel nothing. One day your mop picks up a piece of broken glass among its strands and as you bend over to wring it dry between your hands, the glass shears your palms and the gray water slowly turns crimson.

Yes, your appearance changes, Petru, and scarcely for the better. A progressive atrophy converts your great muscles to fibrous cords whose contractions bend you almost double make one of your arms shorter than the other, hobble your legs. Still you keep on, with your pail dangling from one hand and your mop dragging from the other. The charitable amnesia has made you a boy again in your father's one-room hut in Poland with potatoes and beets to plant in the cold ground and cover with straw for winter. But no one would recognize in you the Om Petru who had marrow in his bones, who laughed and shook his club at the wolves that winter brought; the Petru who wasn't afraid, for a wolf can't turn but a dog can! Petru, man, you are ready for anonymity and what difference does it make how you arrived there? Through what iniquity or injustice? You are man and you must die.

That day, you arrive stupid and drooling at the little shop with the black and white squares of linoleum. The young woman who runs the stores watches indifferently as you take a few inches of rubber hose from your pocket and draw water into your pail from the tap in the wash-basin. You shake a little washing powder into the water. You drag the pail along the floor to the center of the store. Suddenly you straighten up, plunge the mop into the pail and with long rhythmic movements fling great gouts of soapy water over the floor. Petru! Petru! Your mind shows a certain poetry in the delusion it chooses to put a finish to you. You are scything! You are mowing a field of hay! Isn't the exertion too much for you, Petru? Isn't it too hot? No. You are young! You are strong! You have never been sick a day in your life! The young storekeeper thinks you are an old man. She is fascinated by your vigor as your mop soaks up the dirty water to reveal the drying oil-cloth underneath. Then something explodes inside your head. You sag against the wall. The sun! you think. Your head jerks from side to side with open mouth and widely-staring eyes and slowly, slowly, with your shoulders glued against the wall while your deformed legs spraddle in front of you, you slide to the floor.

"What's the matter?" cries the young woman.

But you do not hear her. You think over and over again: "The heat. The heat. A touch of the sun."

Petru, it would be a curious sun down in that dim cell where never sun reaches. It is an artery! The exertion of your scything burst a vessel wall bruised by that concussion and the blood is pouring over your brain, poor fool. Turn over on your belly and die. Perhaps the narcosis that accompanies death will dull the pain.

You twist. You writhe. You struggle to your feet. You won't retire from business these last few minutes. You look for your scythe. You must finish the mowing; it is getting dark. You pick up the mop and slowly soak the rest of the water from the floor. Some haying, Petru! You clean the toilet and carry the pail of dirty water to the curb. What a crop! You're dying, you bale-carrying mule. Lie down and bray your last. The young shop-keeper's eyes will fill with tears afterwards when she recalls: ". . . He was dying . . . he finished his job and all the while he was dying."

Lie down, you humbug you. Ah, there you go.

"My head!" you say.

Indeed, your head! What's the matter, Petru? You haven't a headache, by any chance? The young woman looks alarmed. Your skin has paled. Your ruddy face is white.

"What is the matter?" she screams.

"My head!" you say.

"Shall I call a doctor?" cries the young woman.

"I have no money," say you.

Money? Money, Petru? To borrow a thought of yours, you'll need no money where you're going. No, nor even your identity. You are to be dispersed into the materials from which you were fashioned.

Suddenly Death, that thief, that angel, that swine, lifts the blind he has held before your eyes ever since the blow that brought you down. You see! Staring, you shriek and after the sound dies away, your mouth stays open, slavering.

"I want an ambulance," says the young woman sickly into the telephone.

You fall to the floor, Petru. The frightened shopkeeper hears the stertorous breathing in your throat, runs out and drags the policeman from his beat. Does she think the blue serge and brass buttons will stop Death like traffic at a corner?

Petru, you open your eyes for a last time. You attempt to sit up and the shopkeeper and policeman rush to help you. You take out your receipt book.

"Sign," you try to say, but your mouth fills with blood and with movements gradually petrifying, you fall back against the wall. The breath rushes finally and noisily from your lungs. The young shopkeeper and the policeman listen at your chest as though they don't believe it. But there's nothing—no sound. You're dead and you will be taken to the morgue. The officer goes outside, the young woman goes to the toilet to vomit. They have neglected to close your eyes and you stare fixedly before you.

What do you see, Petru? The green pastures and pearly gates? Are you there where the meek inherit the blessings, where the rich who bled you are not?

You look straight ahead and say nothing. It is two hours before the morgue van final comes. You've begun to freeze in the sitting position in which you died. The men can't straighten you out. One gets angry at you, Petru. He draws back his brogan and kicks you in the chest.

You don't answer, Petru. You only make a hollow sound like a dead ass.

# A Lumpen

## NELSON ALGREN

*(Scene: West Madison Street, Chicago.)*

THE RAIN came straight down one morning at Taylor and Halstead and pigeons flocked on a roof. I'd been cursing the clock all night at the Olive Branch Mission, and I thought to mooch a little down Taylor. I thought of a song learned in another city and I hummed that song to myself.

> On Union street I bought bad whiskey
> On Hobby street I bought bad beer
> Down in the stalls stand ten bad women
> All cryin', Lord, I'm here

But gimme somethin' in my pocket and you can keep that Lord stuff.

On the corner of Morgan and Harrison a man was handing out little books. I seen he didn't give one to a girl who came past, so I thought, I should like one of them little books too. A Greek in a coat came by and the guy give him three and the Greek threw 'em all away except one. I walked past slow an' the guy didn't see me, so I went past again an' he didn't move. So I stopped dead still in front of him an' says, "Partner, I'll have one of them little books." So he picked the one up off the ground an' he give me that.

I must be gettin' to look kind of crummy, I thought, I must be gettin' to look pretty bad. But I didn't say a word. I just went off with my head in the little blue book, readin' it hard like I had buboes and wanted

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to know from the book where to go. The book says Are You the Wreck of a Man, Consultation Free. And I tried to mooch a bit down Morgan, but every other guy is a cop these days.

I threw the book away when I come into the shelter on account they stink your clothes every night here an' if the louser sees I am readin' such a book he will ask have I got a hard chancre or what, that I am reading such a book.

Then I'd have to get undressed just to show him I ain't.

When I got into bed I thought of a song I learned once, so I hummed that song to myself.

My daddy he is in prison
He's lost his sight they say
I'm going for his pardon
This cold December day

Write me a letter
Send it by mail
Send it in care of
The Birmingham Jail

Then I fell asleep. Are You the Wreck of a Man, I thought, Consultation free.

All that night it rained.

In the morning I walked west down Harrison and that was when I seen this parade. Niggers was walkin' with white men, carryin' banners, so I stood an' watched.

"Them's mighty cocky niggers," I said to a guy.

"We all came out of a hole, didn't we?" the guy said back.

"Maybe you're a nigger yourself," I said.

"Maybe I am and maybe I'm not," he answered.

I thought for a second and then I said, "Say, guy, you want some o' me?" And I doubled up both fists.

"I got no time for fightin' now, 'cause I'm gettin' in the parade," said the guy and before I could spit through my teeth he was gone.

"Black and White, Unite and Fight," said a sign a white guy was carryin' and I could read every letter.

I went up to a guy and said, "Mister, I ain't got a *goddamn* thing," and he looked the other way.

"I'll get McGinnes after you," I said, and the guy said, "Who's McGinnes?"

Consultation free, I thought, only I didn't know where to go.

"If I could just get some chippie to marry me," I thought, "I bet I could get on relief."

I kept thinking of them Black and White signs all morning, till it stopped raining.

And in the afternoon I thought, "The trouble with the whole works is Jews an' Niggers. That's why I'm down and out."

Right before dark I ran into Sully, selling a newspaper called The American Progress, with big red headlines on it. "It's for Long," Sully told me. "You could sell too if you wanted."

So that's what I'm doing now. It's a better job than the guy with the books has got.

# Spread Your Sunrise!

## RICHARD WRIGHT

Good God Almighty
Open up your eyes
And look at what I see
Tearing through them Urals
And leaping over that Volga!
It's a bushy-haired giant-child,
Big-limbed and double-jointed,
Boisterous and bull-headed,
With great big muscles bursting through his clothes!
Over railroads and above stackpipes,
Past skyscrapers and power plants,
Across farms and through forests,
By mine tipples and water dams
He's plowing forward night and day
Leaving cities rocking and shaking as he goes!

Hooooly Chriiist!
What *is* that he's got in his hands?
By George, in one he's holding a bucketful of sunrise,
And in the other he's swishing a long tall broom,
And Jeeesus, the fool's splashing crimson everywhere,
Just painting the whole world red!
Go on, Big Boy, go on!
March in your red brogans
And up-root the little fences between the nations!
Smear the capitols!
Coat the crosses on the steeples!
Dab every government building!
Say, when you come to Germany, finish the job old Goering started:
Make that Reichstag blaze, and no fooling!
Then, just for fun,
Fling a drop of red over in Rome on the Pope's nose,
And if he squawks, slip him the quiet ha-ha,
And keep moving!

Gallop on, Big Timer, gallop on!
If anybody ask you who your Ma and Pa were
Show your birth certificate signed by Lenin:
UUUU! SSSS! SSSS! RRRR!
And tell them you're a man-child of the Revolution:
Seed of fiery workers' loins,
Fruit of October's swollen womb!
Get along, Hot Shot, get along,
Gallop with a high hand and dash your brush of red!
Scud out across the Atlantic
And as you skid toward the good old U.S.A.
Dip the bristles of your broom deep into the sunrise
And dress the Statue of Liberty in a flaming kimono!
Shucks, ain't nobody never seen the likes of you, Kid!
Shelve the Stock Exchange deeper into the red
And swab the dome in Washington!

Travel on, Man, travel on!
Slap-dash across the states in your Five-year boots!
I'll swing onto the cuff of your pants as you pass Chicago!
Tramp with your legs of steel,
Jar the millionaires in their summer homes
And make them feel who's on their trail!
Stride on, Big Shot, stride on,
Stride and spread your sunrise, red-wash the whole world!

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# Guns

## PETER QUINCE

THE truck jolted down into the valley, leaving Pacheco Pass behind and found the highway to Tulare. Johnny casually shifted his cigarette. "Do you think they will try to stop us?" I asked. Johnny leaned over the wheel. The truck took a terrific jolt. As it settled something fell at my feet. I picked it up, looking at it stupidly. Johnny reached over and took it from my hands.

"Maybe," he said cheerfully. "I don't mind 'em dumpin' me. It's just I wouldn't want 'em to have it so easy as last time."

"How many trucks did they get so far?"

"Four or five, since the strike started. But they ain't gettin' us." He spread his shoulders. "We're goin' through!"

"What did the Party say about you taking a gun?"

"I didn't tell 'em," he said simply. For the next ten minutes I could get nothing out of him. Then he said, "Light me another smoke, huh?" I placed the cigarette in his mouth. He needed both hands. The wheels were out of line. He puffed the smoke into glow, dangled it from the corner of his mouth, then stepped on the gas. The motor raced. "This is the spot. If we get by it—" He peered forward. As the truck mounted the incline, its speed falling with every yard we climbed, I looked sharply to both sides of the road. The motor coughed.

"Do you think we'll make it?" I shouted.

He didn't answer. A tight smile touched his lips. The gun was in his lap. We breasted the summit and started down. He eased in the brakes. "We're riding the gravy train now," he said. He laughed a little. An hour later, just at dusk, we unloaded the food into the union headquarters. "Well, so long," said Johnny. "Be back with another load in the morning." I waved to him. I had decided to stay overnight.

I went into the union hall. On the cracked whitewashed walls were revolutionary slogans, posters. Up front, sitting at a table which stuttered to the click of a typewriter, was a white boy in cords and a washed blue shirt. I nodded and strolled toward the rear, past several rough benches, past a literature stand, past the pile of food to where two Mexican boys worked over a mimeograph machine. Their hair was matted in moist curls against their dark, strained faces. Their hats lay on a nearby bench. Two cards stuck out prominently from the hatbands. One of the cards showed a black star on a red background. In the star were three letters: Y.C.L. The other card said: Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union.

One of the boys looked up a moment, flashing me a mute smile. "You look fagged," I said. "Can I help?"

I remember, once, marching next to an old woman in a demonstration. She carried a heavy banner. It was a hot day. It was a long march. But when I offered to relieve her she gave the same answer as the Mexican kid. "No," the kid said quickly, "thanks." A leaflet fluttered to the floor. HUELGISTAS ALGODONEROS! Sticking it into my pocket until I could get someone to interpret it for me, I returned to the white boy at the typewriter.

"Say," I said, "is there a kid, Tony Masso, down here from the Frisco League?"

"Yeh," he said. "We bunk together. You from up north?"

I nodded. "I'm Eddie Reimer. Y.C.L."

We shook hands. "Tony mentioned you. I'm in the League here."

"Where is the guy?"

The boy—Jerry—passed an arm across his forehead. "Sleeping," he said. "Been up 'bout sixty hours running." He yawned. "My turn soon as he gets back. If he ever wakes up."

"Maybe I can get him for you."

"Gee, that's an idea! I don't know how you could find him, though. He's over in Mexican town. Wait a second." He found a pencil and quickly mapped out the streets, explaining as he went along. "You'll know when you get to Mexican town because the sidewalks stop. And you can tell by the smell. There aren't many toilets, and they fill up, and you got to keep moving the privys. Can you talk Spanish?"

"No."

*Phil Wolfe*

"Anybody in jeans or overalls is okay. They will have a union card sticking out someplace. Ask for the pool room. Then follow down this road, see? There's a small tent here with a family of four in it. A baby'll probably be crying. It's sick. They'll tell you where to go. You say to them, *Viva la huelga!* and tell 'em Tony's name. See?"

"*Viva la hulega,*" I said.

"No. *Viva la huelga!*"

"What does it mean?"

A hatless boy came running into the hall, followed by a crowd of cotton strikers. His face was white, like bleached bone. His eyes were wide with horror. You could almost see the jagged, staccato run of his breathing. "They just had a massacre at Pixley!" he yelled. "They killed 'em!" he screamed. "I just saw it all! They killed 'em!"

Jerry grabbed the boy by the shoulders and forced him into a seat. "Shut up!" he ordered. He shoved a fist into the boy's face. "Shut up, or I'll smack you!" His voice slid into a crazy key. "Now," he said, as the boy sobered, "take it easy. Tell me what happened."

"Paul was talkin' to us opposite the ha'" The growers come up in cars, wearin' sh[illegible] guns. They started cuttin' up, cussin' an' threatenin' t' run us out of town. Paul, he yelled for us t' keep our head an' not t' start nothin'. He said fer us t' come in the hall an' finish our meetin'. Then they started shootin'."

"How many were—?"

"How do I know? Everybody was fallin'. They musta got Paul, too."

In the stunned silence that followed an Oklahoman thrust his sombrero back over his head. "Wal," he drawled, "I reckoned we'd need more'n numbers. I'm go'n fer my gun."

A tall Negro with a magnificent spread of shoulders, standing at the Oklahoman's side, also moved toward the door. "Got business t' tend tuh, Ah have," he murmured. The crowd, which by this time, jammed the hall, trickled to the exit. The trickle turned to a stream.

Jerry's fingers bit into my shoulders. "For Christ sake," he whispered, "across the tracks, next to the library. Hull House. You can't miss it. Get Cara. I don't know if I can stop 'em. Know her?" I nodded and thrust toward the door. Jerry jumped up on a chair. "Comrades!" he shouted. "Listen, we've got to keep our heads!" He punched the words slowly. "Don't you understand? We're not ready for guns. Do you want the National Guard? Martial law? Lose the strike?" I got outside.

In a few minutes I returned with Cara, the union secretary. I waited in the doorway as the strikers made an aisle for the girl. I

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*Phil Wolfe*

heard the reproof in her voice. The simple explanation as to why, as yet, workers must deny themselves the use of guns. I could see the Negro's head, towering above the others. There was an abashed grin on his face. I could imagine the Oklahoman shifting his ew to the other side of his mouth, consider-

Then I wiped my face and went off a[illegible]n the street toward Mexican town.

The one-room shack was raised on stilts. I banged on the door. In the distance a dog barked. From within a voice called: "Who's there?"

"Eddie Reimer. Is that you, Tony?"

A crack appeared. The door widened, closed behind me, and was firmly bolted. An oil lamp was lit. Tony, his face swollen with sleep, threw a heavy, ancient revolver on his decrepit bed. "Gee," he said after we had exchanged greetings, "you sure threw a scare into me. I damn near pulled the trigger."

"Is it a real gun?" I asked.

"What do you think? These vigilantes are like mad dogs. They got two warrants out for me down south. I organized flying squads to pull out Arvin." He picked up the heavy gun, patting it fondly. "Boy, this ain't Frisco. If these vigilantes think lynching me will help bust the strike all they got to do is find me."

"Does the Central Strike Committee know you got a gun?" Tony shrugged his shoulders. "Jesus," I said, "you ought to be hauled across the carpet!"

He began to laugh. "Take it easy," he said. "No moralizing outa you. I know I'm screwy. But—this ain't Frisco." Again he laughed. "Y'know, Young Marx here," he patted the revolver, "must be about fifty years old. I took it away from a Mexican comrade. I'll bet if I shot at the door it'd take down the side of the shack. Or else blow to hell in my hand."

I told him about the report of the shooting in Pixley. "I left Cara in the hall." I concluded.

"Man! Let's go!"

Jerry greeted us reassuringly . Yeh, they quieted down all right. But God, I don't know how long we can hold 'em back with the growers throwing guns on us every time we turn around. Tony, you hold the hall down a while. I'm going to sit in on the Central Strike Committee meeting. I wanta take up this question of self-defense. Something's got to be done."

In the rear of the hall the mimeograph turned ceaselessly. As I watched, one of the Mexican boys rose stiffly from the bench on which he had been lying, rolled a cigarette, and relieved his comrade, who, curling up in his jacket, drowsed on the wooden plank. Tony leaned back in his chair. "Wish I knew the dope on Pixley," he murmured.

"Somebody oughta be here soon with more details," I said. "We oughta write out some wires to Rolph, the local sheriff and releases to all the papers. Have them ready to ship off as soon as we get the facts."

Tony pecked slowly at the typewriter. "Say," I said, "what does *Viva la Huelga!* mean?"

"Jerry tell you that? It means 'Long live the strike!' You can go anywhere in the valley among workers and be welcomed if you know just that." He chuckled suddenly. "What a strike," he sighed. "Over a hundred-mile front. Twenty thousand out. Mexican, Filipino, Southern white, Negro, Hindu, everybody! And I remember when we were preparing for it. We came to town here. It had never been organized. The workers wouldn't join the union at first. They had seen the papers, which said the Communists had led the grape strike. They wanted to join the Communists!"

"Tell me about Corcoran," I said. We talked about the amazing tent city that had sprung up almost overnight to house some five thousand strikers who had been evicted by the large growers from their former homes. We talked about the semi-military discipline within the camp, the daily meetings, the shortage of food, the threats of the sheriff, the defense squad, made up of every color, creed, armed with clubs, bars, stones and the burning memory of years of horrible exploitation.

"God," Tony said, "I don't know how we have been able to hold 'em back!" A motor choked outside. In a moment a man entered, crossing to us with long strides. "What's up, Curley?" Tony demanded, sighting his face.

"Plenty," said Curley shortly. "Bunch of Mexicans got a machine gun. Don't ask me where. I don't know. I located them in a clump of brush outside of Woodville."

"Strikers?" I interrupted. Curley looked at me.

"He's okay," said Tony.

"Yes," said Curley. "They heard about Pixley. I don't know how many were wounded. Two were killed. The walls of the union hall are full of lead. They heard about it in Woodville, and heard a rumor that the vigilantes were heading that way to raid their camp. The Mexicans have gone plump crazy. They'll ambush the vigilantes and kill every god-damn one of 'em!"

"Couldn't you stop them?"

"Why the hell do you think I came here? Where's Paul or Cara?"

Tony swallowed. "I didn't think to ask. At a strike meeting. And I don't know where."

"What'll we do?"

"Go back," said Tony. "The three of us. Maybe we can do something. Warn the vigilantes not to come." We headed for the car.

*Phil Wolfe*

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"You're crazy," said Curley. "How'll you warn 'em. Stand in the middle of the road and raise your hand? They'll shoot you down."

The car hurtled over the semi-paved roads, its headlights cutting a swath in the night. I remember thinking it was funny that I should notice there was a swell moon overhead. We drove for half an hour. Once, when the engine sputtered, and I thought we had run out of gas, my heart almost stopped. Finally Curley halted the car.

"It's about a hundred yards up the road," he said. "We'd better walk."

We pushed forward. "How'll we let 'em know it's us?" I asked.

*"Viva la huelga!"* Tony yelled. And again, *"Viva la huelga!"* A figure suddenly stepped out of the underbrush at our side. I inhaled something that was half-breath and half-moan. Tony said something in Spanish. The figure led us through. In a few moments we emerged into a glade screened from the road by the low-hanging branches of the trees. Later I found that the branches had been tied to the ground. A Mexican stood ready with a naked knife. At a given signal he would cut the rope, the branches swing up, the nose of the machine gun thrust forward.

Tony and Curley strode to the group of Mexican workers. I stood in the background. The conversation, heated to the breaking point, was a mixture of English and Spanish. The word, Pixley, was mentioned again and again. I had edged forward until I was one of the group. In the distance a motor coughed. Everyone turned toward the sound. Suddenly I was speaking. "One of the boys that was killed in Pixley was my brother," I said. "I am a Young Communist. I tell you give us the gun. We will save it. When the Central Strike Committee says we can use guns I promise to return it to you. I ask you to do this for a dead boy. You will not refuse him, comrades."

They all looked at me, then at each other. They whispered amongst themselves for a time. Then one by one, silently, they touched my hand and disappeared.

Curley, Tony and I stood stock-still. Three automobiles swept past. Moonbeams glinted on steel. A bottle crashed to the road. Voices shouted drunkenly. At last Curley stirred. "They won't do anything tonight," he said. There was a loud crash, followed by the sound of breaking glass. "Wreck," he said briefly. "Yeh, nothing'll happen tonight." He turned to me. "You're the god-damnest liar!"

"Was there a white boy killed in Pixley?" I asked.

"I don't know," he answered.

We got back into the car and drove off towards the foothills. We walked a little way through the underbrush. "Was out here couple of times," Tony offered. He led the way to where an oddly shaped rock stood on end. "Down here." While Curley and I dug a hole Tony took off his sweater and wrapped it around as much of the machine gun as was possible.

We drove back slowly. "Eddie, here, made a promise for us tonight," said Tony. "Some day we'll have to keep it."

# A Trip to Uncle Joe's

SAUL LEVITT

SHE SWUNG past his bed in the early morning, a bandage around her forehead, moving in a waddle. After seeing his mother make that first excursion to the bathroom he didn't sleep any more, and he lay there with the sheets wrinkled and uncomfortable under him and looked out of the window. Four more times until daylight he heard her getting out of bed, groaning a little.

The early morning sounds came up. The milk wagons clattered, then came the voices of women bound on shopping trips; he got out of bed once to sit by the window and stare blankly out to the continuous, ever-present horizon of roofs. Daylight came in a sullen, steel-clouded sky, with the sun a sick, yellowish smear going in and out behind clouds. From the rivershore a quarter of a mile off came the faint roar of the Westchester train beating down and he followed its course south in his mind. Down along the creek it went, before it hit the rivershore, going past the barges. They fished for killies years before in the creek, using an old hat for a net, and brought the fish home in milk bottles and after a few days the killies turned white bellies up in the bottles and you threw them out in the backyard and watched the cats scrap over them. And then farther south, along the river, where the gulls made savage noises, that was where the trim electric train was going now, roaring south to Manhattan, a long, black train.

Down on the street now people came out of houses in Sunday outfits, with bags of lunch and grips holding bathing suits, girls painted up and old boys through with the week's work — everybody making for the beaches. The children shrieked, hopped along in front in rubber shoes, with the older people walking slowly behind them. He heard scraps of conversation, the names Pelham Bay, City Island, Coney Island, and they swept along to the subway and the carlines in big crowds under the steel-clouded sky.

His sister stirred inside. He heard her talking to his mother. He got up and dressed and went in and saw his mother lying in bed with the white bandage around her forehead. He smelt vinegar. She was in for one of her terrific spells, he thought, putting vinegar on the bandage. The boys would be calling soon, for a day's swimming and rowing out at City Island. He expected them any minute and he stared at his mother lying in bed.

Christ, what a life, he said to himself, sinking into a chair by the window and opening up Jack London's *South Sea Tales*. His gawky legs in their first pair of long pants draped themselves over the side of the chair. He read.

At ten o'clock the bell rang and he went to the window. "We're ready," yelled Cockeye. "I'm not going," he said. "Whatsamatter?" yelled Cockeye, shielding his eyes. "I'm sick," Hesh shouted back. "You stink," said Cockeye, trotting off.

He sat in the chair, reading, mopping his head with a handkerchief. He tried to follow through the story of the old Islander piloting a burning ship to safety over three days. "The boy stood on the burning deck," he said to himself, and he stopped reading, threw the book on the table and knotted his stiff hands. The cheap, heavy cord of the shipping room left splinters in his fingers after the day's work. He got a pin and sat down again, trying to dig the splinters out, digging his nails into calloused palms and removing hard skin.

Inside he could hear Ida bustling about, preparing tea. She went past him, her eyes sullen and disdainful. "Mama's sick," she said, and he was going to tell her that he knew it at three o'clock in the morning, but they hated him here. They said he was like the old man. Her worried eyes stared at him as he sat there, and he looked so calm and indifferent she boiled into a rage. "That's a nice way to sit, with your mother sick in there," she said tearfully. He looked at her for a minute, went back to digging the splinters out with the pin.

He didn't say a word to her, but when she was gone he went to a drawer and picked up a letter from his father. This one was marked Dallas. He wished his old man home so that he could tell him a thing or two, wandering around the country. He felt heavy inside, in this sullen heat, and he looked at himself in the glass and rubbed the soft fuzz along the side of his face. "I'll be shaving soon," he said, for no reason in particular.

Everything ran together, his mother's illness, his father's continual wandering over

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the country and his growing up now. . . . And now he'd let himself out of a day's fun at City Island.

Inside she groaned again and he got desperate and keyed up, locked here in the fourth floor of a tenement in the lower Bronx. "If you were only around, pop," he said bitterly. He could kill his old man for wandering around this way, leaving him here, and now he was wearing his first pair of long pants, twenty-two inch bottoms, and working hard downtown. "I could kill him, the bastard, running away all the time."

Why did his old man do it, why all the crazy running around the country and not staying here, but it was swell not being here in this goddam house, in this heat. . . . How did a fellow get out of it; he'd written to that Merchant's Naval Training School and asked if they'd let him work his way through so that he could send a couple of bucks home, but they wrote back and said they couldn't do it. "Dear Sir," they said, "we are sorry to inform you."

Getting out to sea! Down on South Street right under the Brooklyn Bridge a whiff of the sea!

But something in the way, something in the way all the time. Why didn't he do what his old man did, just go off and the hell with what you left behind? It was his old man's family and it wasn't his fault if they had no money. He didn't like this job of helping keep up a family; why did he have to think of it, but you couldn't drop them just like this. But one of these days! If only his old man was here now!

Ida came in again, her eyes desperate. "Maybe we ought to get a doctor," she said.

"I don't want no doctor," Mrs. Miller called in.

He got up and strode over to his mother's room, into the vinegar smell of the bandage around her head. "Lissen, Ma," he said, standing there with his legs apart like a general's. "I'm gonna get a doctor."

"I don't want no doctor," she said, and he stared at her with her wet thin hair flat on her head, her yellow face. A fly buzzed on the green window shade, the vinegar bottle stood on a bureau, a big picture of his grandfather in a gilt frame on the wall behind the bed. "We can't afford no doctor," she said, and she turned her face to one side. She was crying.

He went into another room and marched around it like a general, sixteen years and sturdy for his age, in his first long pants. Around and around, rubbing the soft fuzz on the side of his face and scowling. What a mess for a fellow to be in, not being able to do what he wanted, and he'd always thought that you could just go and do anything that you wanted in the world. . . . But somehow you couldn't; it didn't seem to work out that way. If they only had money. Money! He sat down in the chair, thinking about it, about money, watching the people still going out to the Island and to swimming places along the Sound. He could see the crowds on the beaches, see girls running along, yi-i-ping yip! as they put toes into water and shook their legs, and he flushed a little.

He heard his mother tossing inside and all of a sudden all the things pounding his back, hitting him in his sixteen strong young years, knocking him down, stood up in front of him; his father's breaking with his mother, his jobs in stores and at The News since he was ten, his mother going to work in the laundry. He used to bring her lunch to the laundry and stand outside and watch her with her dress sticking to her, next to black women and wop women. For a second all of it pounded him like a wave, receded. Then he thought of his mother's brother, Uncle Joe, who was supposed to be making a lot of money. His mother was proud of her brother, Joe, who wasn't like the old man. But he didn't need Uncle Joe, he'd make more money in a couple of years and to hell with getting help from anybody. He'd take his mother out of the laundry.

He sat there in the chair, picking the splinters out with a pin and tearing at the callouses of his palms with his nails. Every once in a while he mopped his head. He felt he was big and strong enough to hold the world on his back, looking down the crease of his long pants.

He could hear his sister crying, his mother sick after the week in the laundry near the River. It wiped the smile off his face and when Ida came in, she shrieked at him hysterically, calling him names. "Don't you *feel* anything, haven't you any *feelings?*" she yelled. Her young face was tear-stained, she was almost hysterical. Then he got up and went in and had a glass of milk and a roll. He wet his hair and put on a tie, put his jacket under one arm and went down the stairs.

AS HE walked to the station in the early afternoon he wondered what he'd say to his uncle. Joe knew that Ma had been working in the laundry for two years and yet hadn't done anything about it, but that might've been because Ma never asked him. He remembered that when he was small Joe used to come over and put half a buck in his pocket, slip it into his pocket and then pull his ear softly. Just how would he speak to his uncle this afternoon, he wondered. But he had to go out there now, and it came to him as a sudden blow that he was only a kid and it was all too much for him.

All the way out to Brooklyn on this sultry afternoon Hesh thought of what he'd say to his Uncle Joe, about how tough it was for them since the old man went away on this last trip. He hated the idea of talking that way, but he thought of his mother lying there with that vinegar-soaked bandage on her head. . . . Now just why in hell was his father always running off? Why did people get married if right after it they began to fight? There was something queer about his old man going off to London when he was eighteen, pawning his grandfather's coat to raise the money. Uncle Joe was different, working hard and making something of himself and earning money so that Sam and Al and Ethel, his cousins, could go to school and not have to go to work. Not that he cared a hell of a lot if he didn't go to school, because now that he'd been out a year it didn't seem such swell stuff after all.

The fans swirled over his head. People sat around him, going out to the Island, whole families and he thought suddenly that his family had never been together, going places. . . . He could hear them talking, little groups holding on to themselves and having things to tell to each other, and he felt lonely all of a sudden. What would they say out in Brooklyn about him coming to visit all by himself? He'd never gone out there by himself and they might think it funny. He didn't want them to think anything was wrong right off the bat.

He had the new address in his pocket; they'd moved. Eastern Parkway. It sounded swell: Eastern Parkway. He sat there feeling good at the thought that there was someone in his family who'd worked himself up.

At Nevins, Hesh changed for the Utica Avenue Express, getting off on a wide boulevard, with two green islands running down it. Eastern Parkway, unlike the lower Bronx. It was swell, he said to himself, and he felt good just walking on the sidewalk of Eastern Parkway and looking at the neat stone houses of two stories going all the way down. There were neat children riding shiny bicycles and boys his own age sitting on benches on the green islands and reading and playing ball. . . . He found the house and rang the bell. His aunt came to the door, was surprised, he could see it in her face, kissed him on the cheek, and right behind her was his uncle with whom he shook hands.

He felt swell the way they greeted him, and especially his uncle, shaking hands with him.

"How's ma?" asked Uncle Joe.

"She's sick," said Hesh.

Uncle Joe, very short, in house slippers, pants and a silk shirt, smoking a cigar, stopped puffing at it. He took it out of his mouth, flicked the ash off it.

"What's the matter?" asked his aunt.

"I don't know," he said. "It's that job. It's that laundry."

They went in, with Aunt Sarah and Uncle Joe looking worried.

He felt good for a minute because it had all come out so naturally. They'd asked him and he'd told them. But now what would he say? Would he say something about money, that Joe ought to come across with a loan or something until the old man got tired of traveling? Well, Uncle Joe knew now that Ma was sick, that it must be damn tough for them, and it was up to

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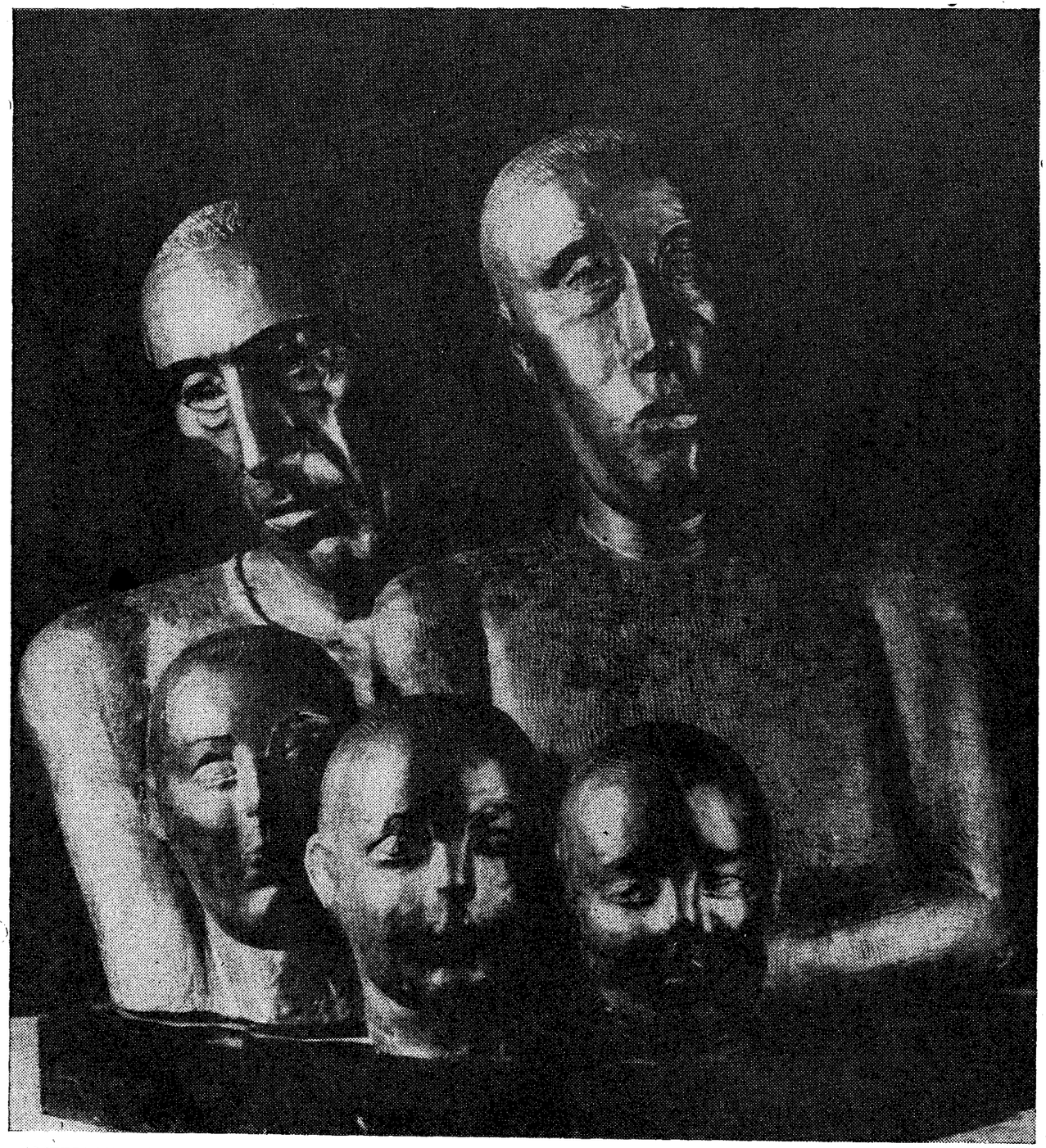

AMERICAN MINER'S FAMILY, BY MINNA HARKAVY *(From a Group Exhibition, Brooklyn Museum)*

Joe now. He'd just sit around and wait and act as if it was a visit, a friendly visit and not especially about Ma.

It was three o'clock. His cousins were out at Rockaway. "Now, I ain't got the energy," said Uncle Joe, rocking in his chair. "I like to sit home on Sunday. That's the biggest pleasure I get. Do you want some ice cream, Heshie?"

Mrs. Berg was going out. She came back with the ice cream. After the ice cream Aunt Sarah took him out to the garden. "We got a garden in back," said Mrs. Berg proudly. They went through the screen door of the kitchen. It was a neat little place with cross-walks and flower beds. He stayed there awhile by himself, after his aunt went back into the kitchen; he could see the Parkway from the garden, the big cars running up and down. A bee buzzed over the flowerbeds. He bent down to watch ants crawling around their little mound of sand the way he had done years before on the East River lots.

It was cool here, but after a while he remembered why he'd come and he went in, wiping his mouth to get rid of the sticky ice-cream taste. His uncle slept in the armchair, a cat drowsed by the stove. In the parlor his aunt worked the radio on a low note. He went into the parlor, staring at the china sets in closets, the immense dining table, the same picture of his grandfather which hung over his mother's bed, the photographs of his cousins.

It was cool and quiet in his Uncle Joe's stone house on Eastern Parkway and somehow it made the picture of his mother lying in bed with her vinegar bandage far away. He wished he had the Jack London book with him so that he could get into that story about the calm pilot guiding a burning ship through the South Seas for three days searching for a harbor.

At six in the evening his cousins came in with a clatter, tanned, and Sam carried tennis rackets. They said hello with enthusiasm, slapping him on the back, introduced him

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to a friend from Rockaway. His uncle woke up, shuffled in, rubbing his eyes. "Did you have a good time, that's all I want to know?" he said in a big, booming voice.

Hesh stood to one side, watching, and he heard all the voices going, leaving him out suddenly. He found himself looking down at his shoes and at the crease in his long pants which didn't look so hot next to those of his oldest cousin, Sam. Sam was short, like Uncle Joe and he wore a pair of striped flannels and white shoes. Sam and the friend, George, talked about school and graduation in February.

He tried to get into the conversation about school, but couldn't do it, and so gradually he found himself talking in monosyllables, and then he went off to the radio, sitting there and feeling baffled somehow.

The baffled feeling carried over through the supper. He ate and didn't enjoy it, watching himself as he carried food to his mouth. After supper his young cousin, Ethel, practised on the piano. The boys went out for a walk, with Sam showing him a pack of cigarettes and asking him to come out. He stayed, though, waiting for his uncle to say something.

He wandered through the house restlessly, staring out of the window at the lighted houses of the Parkway; he came back into the parlor again and his uncle sat in an armchair, belching gently. "Your father," said Joe suddenly, shaking his head. "Your father is no good." He looked at Hesh with a concerned expression on his face. "I remember him as a boy with his *Polska Partya Soscyalistische*. He never went to *cheder*. . . . Who told Ma to marry him? No one." Color swept up into his face, right up to the top of his forehead, with the bald top of his head showing pale. "You're getting big, Heshie, my boy, I wanna talk to you like a man, you gotta know the whole story about your family. *We* never wanted Ma to marry him, your Ma was a good-looking girl, she could have married a *somebody*."

The gawky boy sat there opposite the little man, his dark face flushed, nodding his head up and down as the uncle drove home point after point. Tears mounted in the little man's eyes, glistening above the pouches.

"Have you heard from him?" asked Joe.

"We got a letter last week," said Hesh.

"Sarah," called Uncle Joe, getting up out of the armchair. "You gotta come in. There's some news about Moishe."

His aunt came in and sat down.

"Well," said Uncle Joe urgently, "what did he say in the letter?"

"He said there's no work where he is, now . . ."

"Where?"

"Dallas, Texas," said Hesh.

"When he was here in New York," said Joe, "what did he do? Did he ever stay on a job? Down on 36th Street, when he was a foreman of a whole shop of forty girls—that was right after the War—*do you know what he did?*"

The little man's head swayed, he drove out the end of the cigar with his thumb, in the ashtray. "They went out on strike and *he went out with them.*"

"I know your father," said Joe. "I knew Moishe Miller in the old country, my boy." He got up, pounding the mantel-piece above an ornamental fire-place. "Didn't he have the same chance as me?" he demanded. "Didn't he?"

The gawky boy sat still. "I guess that's right," he said.

The bell rang as his uncle talked there in the parlor. Friends of his uncle came in. Doctor Newberg. "I want you to meet my nephew," said Uncle Joe, "who you can see for yourself is getting to be a pretty big boy." His uncle and the friends sat in the parlor. He listened to them talk, mentioning money and deals casually. They played cards. It got smoky, after one hour, two hours and they kept on playing. Chips in front of each of them, their faces concentrated. He sat in a corner, watching. Once he got up and looked at a clock. Eleven. Somehow he hadn't gotten down to anything on the trip to Brooklyn and soon he'd have to be going home. And then he wondered if possibly Uncle Joe hadn't perhaps realized what he had come for.

At eleven-fifteen his uncle got up for a minute. "Lissen, Uncle Joe," he said. "About Ma."

His uncle walked into the kitchen and he followed. "Well, now, Heshie, my boy," said his uncle, "you don't know how it is when a man's in business. When I wasn't in business I thought it was nothing. But in business a man gets his money all tied up. All I'm drawing is my salary. I got a mortgage to pay off on this house. . . ." He seemed to be pleading, put his hand on Hesh's shoulder. "See what I mean? It's the cash that I ain't got."

They were standing in the kitchen, which was dark, except for the light from the parlor, cutting the uncle's face into black and pale pieces. Hesh could see the pouches under his uncle's eyes. He thought he could follow what his uncle was driving at. Money was a queer thing.

"We got to do something about Ma, though," said Joe.

"It's in the summer that it's hard," said Hesh. "It's hot as—it's hot there, you don't know how hot it is."

"Well, you tell Ma," said Joe in a booming voice, "I'll be over to the house soon. I got some things to do next week, but I'll get over soon."

"I guess I'll be going," said Hesh. "Thanks, uncle."

He said goodby to his aunt and went out on Eastern Parkway. It was late and he had to be up early tomorrow. The shade trees at the curb swished in a slight wind. From windows in the neat two-story houses he heard girls laughing. People were coming home in cars from the beaches, talking about the big, bright day on the shore. On the train, hot as an oven, there were crowds coming home from the Island, with children draped over laps, asleep.

All the way home he sat still, staring out on the piping along the tunnel walls, thinking of the whole afternoon in Brooklyn. His mind ran back, recollected different things his uncle had said. And he remembered his uncle when he was small, before he looked the way he did now. That was before Uncle Joe had gone into business. He had been different then somehow, though exactly how he didn't know. It grew on him as the train roared north under the streets of Brooklyn and Manhattan that his uncle had changed. A lot. And when he got off at the station in the Bronx it occurred to him that his uncle had somehow fooled him, cheated him; he didn't know just how. About his father. That was so. About a man's money being tied up. That was so. But somehow he had been fooled. He went along quiet, dark city streets with the quiet, home-going crowds talking about tomorrow, talking about sunburn, the jammed beaches, with children moaning fretfully.

He was exactly where he was in the morning, he thought. Uncle Joe had fooled him. That was the big thing, he couldn't get over it; it filled him up, it was bigger than the trouble they were in at home: that Joe had done something dirty, as if he were a stranger, a fellow his uncle was doing business with. His uncle had gotten away with something.

He stood outside the door for a moment, his insides seething. Inside the house it was quiet. They were asleep, but his mother awoke when he came in. "Why can't you keep quiet?" she said weakly. "How do you feel?" he asked. "What do you care?" she said bitterly. "You go out and have a good time." He knew she was lying there with that bandage on her head and he smelled the vinegar. He said to himself with a rush of anger: Boy, I could tell you something about your brother and you think he's the swellest guy on earth. I could tell you a hell of a lot about him and what he's gonna do for you. Nothing, that's what he's gonna do. . . .

He could yell it out right through this hot house that you could have a bastard right in your own family, but he didn't say it, though, and just went into his room and lay there on the bed, his gawky boy's legs stretched out, the Jack London book near his head.

He saw shapes moving behind shades, going to sleep. Overhead the moon came out finally, the sky cleared and all the Bronx roofs, the continuous, ever-present horizon of roofs like a wall showed black and massive under a clear night sky. A slight wind blew on his wet face. A baby moaned somewhere. He lay there for a long time, rubbing his calloused hands against each other in the darkness.

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# Another Washington Circus

JAMES T. FARRELL

WASHINGTON.

IT IS after midnight and the Senator from Louisiana has been talking for over twelve hours in the Senate chamber. He has read the Declaration of Independence and most of the Constitution of the United States, furnishing ironical explanations to prove that the Senate does not exercise its prerogatives. He has devoted considerable time to the clause endowing the Congress with the attempt to define and punish piracy and the attempt to ascertain whether or not this clause can be interpreted to include power over Mr. Vincent Astor's Nourmahal. He has queried what has become of a sword which Frederick the Great donated to the late George Washington. He has told funny stories about his uncle. He has dilated upon James A. Farley and President Roosevelt's chief masterpiece, General Hugh Johnson. He has furnished recipes for salads and pot likker. He has boasted that as Governor of Louisiana he enforced the Volstead Law so well that no one knew the difference when it was repealed. He has read passages from Victor Hugo.

He has put into the record a proposed law calculated to legalize his share-the-wealth panacea and cure the depression in twenty-four hours and the ninth section of that measure resolves that all legislation passed during the administrations of Hoover and Roosevelt be repealed. And still he talks. He waves his arms high like an excited evangelist. He pounds his fists. He flails. He persuades. He pleads. He denounces. He raves. He bellows. He sways and totters like a man drunk with talk. His filibuster to impede the passage of N.I.R.A. legislation threatens to establish a new senatorial record. And still he talks.

He talks to crowded chambers, colorful with visiting Shriners in mystical scarlet and purple pajamas, and to empty senatorial seats. The galleries are amused and continue filling until in those reserved for the public, there is only standing room. The newspaper men in the press gallery curse and laugh by turn and hang around, listening, scribbling notes, waiting for new wisecracks, hoping for it to continue, hoping for it to end so that their day's work is over.

And still the Senator from Louisiana talks, glancing from the face of one colleague to another, looking up to the press gallery, his mouth opening in a new bellow, his arms spreading outward in a winged elephantine gesture. Suddenly his eyes light upon his friend, the distinguished Senator from Minnesota. He declares that in 1932, he was nominated candidate for President by the Farmer-Labor Party. He was made the leader of that party and his friend, the distinguished Senator from Minnesota, would not support him. He was the boss and his friend, the distinguished Senator from Minnesota, would not obey his order. His distinguished colleague bolted the ticket. Now what kind of a party is it when its only member will not support its leader? He would like to know. The gallery explodes with laughter. The sitting president of the Senate perfunctorily announces that if there are any more expressions of approval or disapproval, the galleries will be cleared. After all, laughter is not befitting the dignity of the highest legislative body in the land.

Suddenly, the eyes of the Senator from Louisiana gleam. His face lightens, livens. He straightens up, as if imbued with new and electric energy. He announces that he has been speaking for over twelve hours and that his speech is the greatest one ever delivered in the United States Senate. Again he totters, staggers, talks as he winds to his own desk for a sip of milk. He turns again, faces his party colleagues. He asks them why they are filibustering against him when nobody wants the N.R.A. anyway. Why are they fighting against themselves? Why are they unable to get together? He will get together with them and everything will be hunky-dory.

A fat Senator arises. Slyly and in support of the Senator from Louisiana, he asks will the latter yield to him the floor for one hour so that he (the Senator from Louisiana), may confer with the leadership in the Senate, if there be any leadership, and untangle this unfortunate situation. The Senator from Louisiana will yield, if he will not lose the floor. He is a good fellow. He is a compromiser. He will go even more than halfway. He will get together. He won't fight. He wouldn't filibuster. If they will give unanimous consent to the proposition, he will yield. A Senator from Alabama is on his feet objecting. A group of younger first-term Senators in the last Democratic row are on their feet. They object. The junior Senator from Washington is talking, declaring that he and his fellow first-term colleagues have sat for months in the Senate seeing the Senator from Louisiana control the Senate. They were elected by their people and given mandates to do something for those who are really suffering from this depression and the Senator from Louisiana has prevented every attempt at legislation calculated to help those who suffer.

The Senator from Louisiana shrugs his shoulder. He does not control the Senate. He is not the Administration. He did not pass the N.R.A. He even advised the people of his state not to support it. And as to the leadership in the Senate. What leadership? He never witnessed any leadership. The junior Senators in the last row seemed to think they were leaders. His friend the Senator from Kentucky and his friend the Senator from Mississippi, they seemed to think they were leaders, but nobody else did. Leadership? Where? He turns to the Republican side of the chambers, points at his Democratic colleagues, declares that they are the Anti-Democratic Party and that he is the Democratic Party.

Senators arise, leave. Others wander in. They nod. They sit with chins pressed lifelessly into their palms. They yawn. They watch the Senator from Louisiana sip milk, toss small chunks of chocolate into his mouth, wander along the front row of desks, stand facing the gallery, talk, turn. He zigzags, looks at the clock, announces that it is now thirteen hours since he has started his speech, the greatest speech ever delivered in these halls. He has laid the ground work of it quite satisfactorily, and he can proceed with the details. He glances along from one bored Senatorial face to another. Before he continues, he wants to ask a question. Before he goes into the details of this speech, and continues with his lecture on the Constitution of the United States, he wants to ask why do not his colleagues and his good friends, because he is a friend of everybody, why do they not go home? Many of them are old, older than he is. They need sleep. He wants to see that they get the sleep they require. He wants to help them and see that they go home. What they need is sleep. Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Why don't they get it by adjourning, instead of sitting here filibustering on him the way they are?

More questions. A parliamentary inquiry. A Senator rises and demands the regular order. The chair declares that the regular order is for the Senator from Louisiana to continue. The Senator from Louisiana makes a parliamentary inquiry concerning his controling the floor. The vice-president sitting in the chair declares that the chair will recognize the Senator from Louisiana as long as the Senator can stand on his feet. The Senator from Louisiana points at the chair and states that he can stand on his feet and talk longer than the Vice-President and the Senate can sit down. Laughter in the galleries and again the mock threat to have them cleared.

The Senator from Louisiana turns to face his colleagues. He opens his arms widely, flings his head back, sways slightly and announces that he is pleading, begging, entreating for harmony. All that he wants is harmony. They can all get together and adjourn and his friends can all go home, take

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showers, have a comfortable night's sleep, return tomorrow refreshed.

The Senator from Nevada rises and again asks for the floor and suggests a conference. Again an objection. The Senator from Louisiana shrugs his shoulders. He suggests that they ought to go home and sleep, but that since they won't, he will continue with his speech. He has lots more to say. He can talk to them for another twelve hours, educating them, if they will only have the sense to listen. He proposes that, if there be unanimous consent, a half page of a Supreme Court decision be read into the record. Objection. He proposes that the Lord's prayer be read into the record. Objection.

He flounders. He talks. He wavers drunkenly, his head dropping. He jerks himself into an erect posture. Three o'clock. He has been talking for fourteen hours. He would have been finished with his speech if he had not been so generous with his time and yielded at least seven hours of it to his colleagues for questions. But he must continue. He has lots more to say. After another query, a Senator warns him that he has had coffee and can stay awake and sit for twelve more hours if necessary to end his control of the United States Senate. The Senator from Louisiana waves his arm contemptuously. Coffee. Drinking coffee around here. That wasn't coffee. That was slop. They don't make coffee in Washington. If anybody wants coffee he has to go down to Louisiana for coffee. But he must continue. He has pleaded with them for peace. He has begged them for harmony. He has entreated them to go home and sleep like sensible men. But they insist on filibustering against him. And all he wants to do is to defend the constitution. He will defend the people of America against fascism. He will defend them against Bolshevism. He turns about. He reels and mutters over and over again—State's Rights. He suddenly kicks his leg like a man with the jerks. He works his arms. He begins to walk with a limp and he weaves to the glass of milk on his desk. He again asks for harmony, his voice cracking, growing so hoarse that many in the galleries lean forward in the effort to hear. He seems able to go on endlessly, talking in a half stupor, limping more and more pronounceably. Suddenly, unexpectedly, at ten minutes to four, he yields the floor and disappears.

The galleries buzz, empty. Flabby-faced Shriners with red fezzes and worn ladies in evening gowns leave. They have sat in on the inside of history. Correspondents, doped with liquor, dying for their beds, run for their typewriters. The highest legislative body in the land, the august Senate of the United States of America, uncertainly stutters in parliamentary haggling, trying to find out precisely what has happened. The few remaining rubber-neckers lean over the balcony railings, trying to hear what is being said. The stenographer forever continues taking his shorthand notes. A circus ends.

# Correspondence

## From Angelo Herndon

To The New Masses:

The swift and decisive action of the workers and their friends among the intellectuals has again won a short period of respite for me. The execution of my sentence of 18 to 20 years on the infamous Georgia chain-gang has been stayed until the fall term of the U. S. Supreme Court, when the justices will consider my petition for a re-hearing.

The International Labor Defense is now launching a signature campaign on an unprecedented scale. It is asking for two million signatures to be affixed to a petition to Governor Eugene Talmadge of Georgia. The petition will ask my freedom. It will ask the wiping out of the "slave-insurrection" law under which I was indicted.

The readers of The New Masses are already familiar with my case. For the "crime" of leading starving white and Negro workers to ask for bread in Atlanta and for the added "crime" of advocating equality for the Negro people, I was flung into Fulton Tower Prison where I remained for 26 months of torture. I was tried on the basis of a law of pre-Civil War days, passed when the slave-masters feared that their slaves might act for freedom. I was sentenced to serve 18 to 20 years on the Georgia chain-gang—actually, a death sentence preceded by horrible tortures.

My appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court involved the most elementary constitutional rights—to meet, speak and petition for redress of grievances. What happened? Pontius Pilate washed his hands of me. The Supreme Court hid behind a false technicality. It would not consider the constitutionality of the "insurrection" law. It would not consider whether that law, even if constitutional, could possibly apply to such actions as I had taken.

I ask the readers of The New Masses to act in my behalf. I ask them to sign and help circulate the petitions to the Governor of Georgia. I ask them to write or telegraph the Supreme Court to re-hear my case and judge it on its merits. Above all, I ask for speed, for the time is very short.

Angelo Herndon.

80 E. 11th St., Room 610,
New York City.

## Men Dying in a Tunnel

To The New Masses:

Your readers might be interested to know some late developments of the story of the men dying of silicosis from work in a West Virginia tunnel, which was published in the issues of The New Masses for January 15 and January 22. Jessie Lloyd O'Connor, a stockholder of the Union Carbide & Carbon Corporation, who read the story but was unable herself to attend the annual meeting of the corporation on April 16, sent a proxy to this meeting to delve into the matter of the hideous employer-worker relationships of the U. C. & C.'s subsidiary, the New-Kanawha Power Company, for whom the tunnel was built.

"How much has the company spent in settling the lawsuits of workers dying of silicosis at the Hawk's Nest-Gauley tunnel?" asked Mrs. O'Connor's proxy, to the consternation of the chairman of the meeting. Roughly 250 suits are pending, involving $6,000,000 in claims against the New-Kanawha Power Company.

President Ricks of the U. C. & C., to whom the question was addressed, was "not sure" he knew the case. But a man seated on his right contributed the information: "$150,000,"

At this point Attorney Smith, "Special Counsel for West Virginia affairs," jumped up agitatedly and barked: "I am familiar with this case. We haven't spent a cent to settle the suits." Asked why the $150,000 had been spent, Ricks replied: "Oh, for expenses," and pointed to Smith.

Attorney Smith denied that the men who worked in the tunnel were "our subsidiary's employes," alleging that they were employes of the contractors solely. Whereupon the proxy, a social worker who had been to the scene of construction and talked to the tortured shells of the men who had worked there, challenged the company's stand. She read to the attorney excerpts of the contract of the New-Kanawha Power Company with the contractors, which gives the New-Kanawha's chief engineer not only the power and authority to make any changes he wished in the tunnel work, but also the right to hire and discharge any of the workmen he wished. Furthermore, since these clauses in the contract show there was a direct working relationship between the New-Kanawha and the contractors, the attorneys for the plaintiffs claim that the power company is liable in West Virginia under the law applicable to the master-servant relationship.

To this argument there was no reply. But the proxy to be "further clarified and edified" was invited to talk the matter over privately in Attorney Smith's office.

The New-Kanawha may emphatically deny its liability, as do the contractors also, but whether West Virginia juries are impressed with their feeble arguments it will be interesting to follow.

Philippa Allen.

## Two Cities

To The New Masses:

London, 1935 A.D. — and — Moscow, 18 A.O. (After October).

Which, then is the living reality, London or Moscow? Only two short days apart and yet years, ages apart. Only two months—according to the calendar—had I lived in Moscow, but when I came away, came back to the world of my birth, it was a journey back into ancient history.

This city of dark, dirty, noisy chaotic streets which is London, is this reality? What then of that dazzling new city of daring monuments and joyous boulevards? This city filled with beaten, haunted, dejected faces, faces bewildered and weary, faces calculating and corrupt, sharp and cunning, lewd and degenerate—is this still a living world, after that other place where human beings, really *human* beings, aglow with courage and enthusiasm, joy and knowledge, go about their conscious ways?

These senseless thousands of shops and businesses in London resorting to monstrous deceptions and trickeries in order to survive, can these be taken seriously after one has seen the unified, dignified co-operatives of Moscow? Here in London one is besieged by begging war veterans, begging cripples and widows, begging unemployed coal miners and artists. There in Moscow the artists display heroic paintings of coal miner udarniks, the war veterans and cripples can be seen in rest homes and parks, or at congenial work. Here one is assailed and bewildered by fantastic and futile commercial commandments: "Drink Bass' Beer!" Gargle with X—— Antiseptic!" "Smoke D—— Cigarettes!" "Read the S—— Scandals!" Over there the workers study hygienic and cultural issues, indulge in sports and dramatics, discuss questions of socialist construction and proletarian defense.

Over eighty years ago, Karl Marx wrote that the spectre of Communism haunted Europe. Today, it seems to me, another spectre haunts Europe: the decaying, dying spectre of Capitalism. Today it is Moscow which is the reality, London, Berlin, Warsaw—these are horrible, persistent ghosts which must be finally stamped down into the black dust of mankind's tragic history.

Mike Pell.

## New Masses in England

To The New Masses:

I have been a regular reader of The New Masses for the last year, and I am very enthusiastic about

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You see, we have nothing which resembles it r[illegible]ely in this country, and I might say for that matter, in any other capitalist country. It is to your pages I turn for reviews of English books, plays, etc. Except for our Daily Worker, we get very little Marxist criticism.

I have relatives in New York who send me NEW MASSES regularly.

ROLAND H. ABSALOM.

West Kirby, England.

## Death in the Isle of Pines

TO THE NEW MASSES:

He who has never been imprisoned cannot know the terrible fright which the word "llana" (swampy land covered with sturdy bushes) puts into every prisoner of the Model Prison in Cuba. During the reign of Machado, when the Isle of Pines was under the rule of Castell, we were aware that only criminal prisoners were brought there and that political prisoners had never been put in the "llana." Nonetheless the "llana" was a source of fear for all.

The "llana" was death for the majority of cases, At that time, nobody saw it, but all had it in mind. Like the mysteries of a terrible religion which one never wished to mention, it enveloped us.

If a criminal prisoner was asked—of those who worked for the political prisoners—"What is the llana?" the man's fear would be noted. He would glance fearfully in all directions and invariably would reply, "I do not know!" Others would say that it was the "mysteries" of the enemies of Castell, "who was a good man."

In the Isle of Pines, terror reigned as in few places. Water reached the knees, the waist and up to the chest. Thus must the wood called "llana," excellent for charcoal, be cut. Under a cruel sun, devoured by mosquitoes, smothered by flies and martyred by gnats, with only black coffee in the stomach, the work goes on incessantly. The cruel Rural Guards are sent as incorrigibles to the Isle of Pines and the bloodiest among them are ordered to watch the prisoners of the "llana." From four in the morning until four in the afternoon, with mud to the throat, with the stomach empty, knowing that he who falls from weakness will be shot, the prisoners cut bushes.

The return to the sinister prison is felt with the sweetness of a return home. "Careful!" For he who falls on the road will be killed by clubbing.

Sometimes somebody falters and another sustains him. Then both fall. Another helps these two and also weakens. The club raises those who cannot stand. He who does not rise has his coffin already prepared in the carpentry shop of the prison, where there is never a loss for boxes of every size. "So many die of repentance."

Every afternoon we used to watch them come from a distance—the strongest in front, the weakest behind.

"He will not last the week," somebody used to say, pointing at a prisoner who limped. Two or three days later, he was no longer in the ranks. Only one more who remained in the "llana." Thus daily pass the men condemned to a sure death, sustaining one another and sustained in turn by others.

Those who were sent there, under Machado, were the "worst criminals." Those who are sent now are the political prisoners—workers, school teachers, students, especially the Communists. Among them is Isidro Figueroa, brave Communist leader, railwayman, thin, pallid, sick as the results of the hardships and privations of long years of struggle under Machado and the succeeding governments, and wounded at the side of Trejo. Among them is the student Alfonso, stiff with a painful limp, the deaf and weak Agustin Alarcon and others.

Figueroa will find forces, despite his weakness, to resist. He has raised his voice against the murderous treatment and has been brutally beaten and buried in a dungeon. It is a miracle to see him on foot. He has a will and energy to struggle—to show the temper of the revolutionary workers—champions always in the struggles for their brothers.

Figueroa is cutting weed in the "llana," with water to his waist, feverish with tuberculosis. This is death for him.

The "democratic" government of Mendieta sends to the "llana" the political prisoners whom even the bloody Machado never sent. Batista and Mendieta send there the sick, like Figueroa, to die isolated among criminals, degenerated by the brutalities and the miserable treatment and ready to embitter even more the lives of the political prisoners.

*Only the masses can save him.* Only the tenacious struggle for his liberty can put him back in our ranks, which should feel proud of having brought forth such a fighter as the Communist Isidro Figueroa.

A PRISONER IN THE ISLE OF PINES.

Cuba.

## Letters in Brief

Beth Mitchell, of Birmingham, Ala, informs us of the plight of two workers whose release from torturing imprisonment can be effected by the raising of small sums of money. Israel Berlin, a white worker, framed on a "literature" charge, is in solitary confinement in the basement of the city jail, overrun by rats and vermin. He has ten months more ahead of him. In good health when arrested, his health has broken under the vicious treatment given him as a "Red"; his mother and several younger brothers are denied relief by the city for the same reason. The other case is that of Fred Walker, a militant Negro worker, who has served six months already, and must work out a $100 fine and $22 costs at the rate of 75 cents a day on the city chain gang. Walker, a widower, has an infant daughter who is homeless while he is a prisoner. He is ill and denied medical aid. In Walker's case the prison board has refused to release him unless the balance of his fine, $95, is paid. In Berlin's case, the sum needed is $100. Contributions for the freedom of these two militant workers will be received by THE NEW MASSES, acknowledged and sent South to the proper quarter.

A reader sends us a copy of a curious letter Warner Brothers are circulating among their distributors in behalf of their *Oil for the Lamps of China.* The theatre managers, in turn, send this document out—to employers: "Do you want a tonic for the morale of your staff—do you want to strengthen the loyalty and devotion of the men vital to your organization? Then invite them, send them or recommend to them . . . the greatest motion picture of *business loyalty* ever created. . . . In these days of widespread unrest, when even executives sometimes doubt that service and loyalty eventually bring their just rewards in large organizations . . . a drama is needed to reassure ranking employes about their future and American business, *Oil for the Lamps of China* is that drama."

The July issue of Fight, organ of the American League Against War and Fascism, the editors write, is a special trade-union number. It features an article by Kanju Kato, chairman of the National Council of Trade Unions in Japan.

J. B. liked Granville Hicks' article "The Timid Profession" so much, she thinks it should be reprinted in penny-pamphlet form for wide distribution among college faculties. Madge Portsmith writes from Vancouver, B. C., that she protested to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute against Hicks' dismissal, and says, "I shall always be grateful to Granville Hicks, for it was one of his reviews that determined me to take THE NEW MASSES, which is now my chief weekly pleasure."

The Pierre Degeyter Club, at 165 West 23rd Street, New York, is holding regular musical Sunday evenings. The club urges all composers who have an unheard work to send it to the Pierre Degeyter Composers' Collective for mass approval and performance.


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# REVIEW AND COMMENT

## A Ticket for Tarkington

WHILE I think of it, let me say that I think [illegible] writer of current repute is more certain to go unread in the near future than is Booth Tarkington, and that none is so sure of being remembered, when at all, with contempt. It is obvious enough, though I think no one has troubled to point it out, that the work of this literary gent is about the most perfect extant incorporation of all those sanely sycophantic qualities which are most sharply repulsive to the man who loves the democratic tradition in culture as represented by Whitman and Mark Twain, along with lesser, more fitful lights.

No literary talent I know of is more deserving of the prefix *pseudo*. No talent I know of is more utterly venal, more utterly hollow, so merely deft. *Monsieur Beaucaire* used to seem a *tour de force* done with sureness, firmness, grace and craftsmanship: in fact it is a pantagraphic fabrication in which the effect of something delightfully arch, gallant, elegant and spirited is gotten by mustering within a historically glamorous setting a synthesis of gestures the reader-rousing potency of which has been stereotyped by tradition, and of characters the magic of which has been fixed by fame. *The Turmoil* is a piece of esthetic welching seldom surpassed by the most ambitious literary amphibian of a period dominated by that unlovely species. *The Gentleman from Indiana* is a sterile reformist daydream designed to display the 18-karat nobility of a young man of the author's class and generation; it misrepresents the elements of social conflict and is about as significant socially as was the election of Ruth Pratt to Congress. *Alice Adams* is a glib negotiation of a literary course from which the obstacles had long since been cleared by hardier men. And in this connection it should be realized that Tarkington has never been unwilling to take advantage of an opening once it has been made by writers who pioneer without regard to consequences, nor ever hesitant, after profiting by such efforts, about sinking his literary fangs into his benefactors' flanks.

In the wake of the Red hunts of 1920 Tarkington emitted a play, *Poldekin,* which was superficial, puerile and otherwise calculated to massage the complacence of middle-class fatheads who had begun to sag under the impact of certain events beginning with October, 1917. A goofy Russian young man dithers through the play seeking the meaning of America and is more than contented to receive in return a mess of vaporings about the devotion of the American people to baseball and other forms of circuses without bread. In the early 'twenties, when George Horace Lorimer was concentrating on misinforming the middle class about the Bolshevik Revolution and the American proletarian movement, Tarkington valiantly contributed a serial to some popular magazine in which radicalism in the colleges was made to appear the work of cowardly, simian, foreign-born students with thick Jewish accents, full of slobbering envy and hate for their natural betters. In the mid-twenties, when young men of art and letters were questing for new faiths, forms, ideas and truths, Tarkington limned a tour abroad in the course of which a bluff, blunt Babbitt stepped out and vigorously made life give him what he wanted, while in contrast an intellectual young man winced and fumbled every play. In effect this work was an assurance to the philistine plug-ugly who sanguinely practised the capitalist game of grab that his life was a brave, beautiful and altogether splendid one and himself a life-size model of heroic virtue; and a safe, slanderous characterization of the intellectual recalcitrant as a feebling and a fraud. Personally I have never been able to believe that it takes either genius or courage to put the boots to a man when he is down or to anoint with fond admiration the brow of a well-established bully or boss; but Tarkington performs in both these roles with a verve and enthusiasm which seem to indicate that he finds them expressive of his own highest social and cultural ideals.

A tacit, wide and habitual conspiracy of run-of-mine critics supports the fiction that Tarkington as a writer about boys is a fit successor to Mark Twain. I have read some of the Willie Baxter and Penrod stories. Not only are they miles from being in the class of *Huckleberry Finn*: they are fakey, pithless, sneaky and inane. They nudge and sidle and snigger. They smell of cultural and social dry-rot. They are smug, pasteurized and tepid reminiscences calculated to tickle the self-love of a regressing class whose potential of creative accomplishment has been displaced by a fevered, wormy lust for survival at any price.

The class for which Tarkington writes his boy stories—and his other stories for the matter of that—is going nowhere. On the contrary it began generations ago to withdraw itself from one field after another in which it had encountered social defeat and to center its existence completely around the fetish of personal, material self-preservation: that is, around a core having the cultural, political, and social value of zero. For it is the positive law of class dynamics that when a class ceases to unfold and extend its powers it ceases also to integrate and begins to retreat through socio-cultural neuterism to socio-cultural obliteration. The class to which the typical Tarkington reader belongs has had its doorposts marked for many years with the stigmata of political cringing, ingrowing piggishness, economic catamitism and the inevitable devolution toward the social and cultural polyp. In a milieu permeated by this habitual and growing degradation Tarkington with an air of delicious deviltry has exploited the gauche twitchings, jitterings and fumblings of youth confronted by a life perspective void of social purpose or dignity, in which it must alternately play the bully and the flunkey to gain the most contemptible rewards, and of adolescence which through the craven retreat of its class has been robbed of all positive guidelines to manhood and which thus has been condemned to fritter, creep and stumble blindly toward some chance grip on a dubious destiny. To this essentially ghastly spectacle Tarkington has labored to impart an appearance of universality and charm. He has tried airily and with ghoulish humor to assure his buffaloed, mean and sterile reader that all life is as trivial and empty, all culture as neuter and atonic, all emotion as amorphous and febrile and all thinking as servile and fearful as the little man's own. And the process has been profitable because no class has been harder put to find a knot for its existence to cling to than the American petty bourgeoisie since its conquest by finance capital.

I do not think I am treating of any abstraction when I remark that the surviving American petty bourgeoisie is a class of social and cultural wraiths. I believe that anyone who is as much as half-conscious in the proletarian mode has been impressed with this fact through personal contact at close range. My own outstanding recollection of many somehow exhausting visits among petty-bourgeois people, within the past several years, is that of hearing every social, political or cultural subject quickly broken down into personalities and trivialities, as though the people around me had lost the power of conceiving or grasping the idea of a dynamic group movement of any sort and were forced to take refuge in small-talk and gossip from which no disturbingly definite conclusion might be drawn. This insistence on a dessicated acceptance of the world, I think, is a self-protective measure on the part of the surviving petty bourgeois. In the pinch he would rather be bitten many times by the gnats of meaningless gossip than be steam-rollered by a realization of his cultural impotence and social doom. It has been Tarkington's profitable task to supply this wraith type of class-man with an illusion of his own solidarity, universality and worth.

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Tarkington as a writer does not appear to have improved with experience—and here I mean simply as a performer with the tools of his craft. I have before me Part IV of his most recently completed novel, run serially in The Woman's Home Companion. The name is peculiarly expressive, I think: *Rennie Peddigoe*. The writing is even more empty than I had expected. Good fiction, in my view, requires a sensual immediacy of image, especially where emotional situations are involved. I don't think Tarkington has more than the vaguest adumbration of what may be called image power: he is a wraith-maker for a wraith class. For example:

> As she spoke he saw the slightest rueful twitch of a corner of her mouth and understood that already her young life knew things that were harder to bear than she thought poverty would be. That unintentional and almost imperceptible twitch of the mouth brought to the surface of his emotions an acute pathos that he had often and often felt in her presence and had felt again in his thoughts of her. She stood before him, so delicate, even so fragile, that she seemed able to bear no weight whatever, least of all that of a long sorrow—and yet there was a light about her; she glowed upon him.

Or for instance:

> In this hushed communion they were not looking into each other's eyes—they were just looking at each other; but their eloquent expressions were a little like those seen upon the faces of devoutly musical women intently listening to a symphony. It might be said that these two were listening to music, indeed; that what music they heard, each from the other, was like an unbelievably significant orchestration of an old air, as if a symphony orchestra under some masterful leader played for them Robin Adair, perhaps, or Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms. This look that they exchanged, then, was ethereal and spellbound; it was an old, old look and had upon the observer who saw it—for there was one—the gentling effect that such a look, fraught with divinity and springtime, must ever have upon witnesses not personally concerned with the inevitable results of it.

You see, in the first quoted paragraph there is the corner of a mouth and in the second there are two pairs of eyes; in the first a twitch, in the second a look: and all the rest is metaphysics, springtime and divinity. It reminds me of Omar's:

> We are none other than a moving row
> Of magic shadow-shapes that come and go
> Round with the sun-illumined lantern held
> In midnight by the Master of the Show.

Only in the prose demonstration by the literary gent from Indiana there is no magic; there are only shadowshapes. And this haze of reedy words, stirred faintly by some after-breath of autumnal emotion—this, I think, is none other than the ghostwritten farewell manifestation of a culture already disembodied and lodged wispily in a cultural limbo: a place or state of rest full of vague uneasiness, uneasy calm, atony and inertia. Redone by Maeterlinck and acted in a floodlight of misty blue, Tarkington's stuff might give an impression of a kind of comatose symbolic simulation of life. But as it is, it is but the rustle of dry leaves in a twilight heavy with inanition. There are undoubtedly enlimboed readers who are nourished and are pleasured as well as gentled by this insubstantial fare. But for us who have turned from misty blue toward the red terminus of the spectrum, there is nothing in it whatever. It is obvious that Tarkington's reputation as a prose writer has been propped by the wraithwill of the fading bourgeoisie, petty and middling, and now the illusion is no more; the proletarian wind is blowing the webs away. Evidently there are a number of hermetically protected petty-bourgeois sanctuaries where wraithfolk still sit following the career of Rennie Peddigoe as "unda her 'brella mid piddle med puddle she ninny-goes nannygoes nancing by," but I doubt this will be for long.

Well, to wind up, let me say I think the game is played out. The petty bourgeoisie is a disappearing class and certainly no class-conscious proletarian audience will ever pay a literary parfumeur to spray romantic rose scent to beautify the smell of class cowardice and decay. For us the democratic tradition in culture is rising again after a long submerging. We recognize it as our own, and we are only class-functionally fitted to bring it to its fullest flowering. Whitman and Mark Twain loved the democratic tradition and created greatly within it, but neither, within the bounds of his experience, understood how it could be instrumented to insure its dominance and further growth. The proletariat *does* understand and artists working within the proletarian milieu, even in its present state of primary development, are proving it with steadily increasing craft and power. The art of the American working class of the Left already has reached the point where it is standing the bourgeois critics on their tails and it is a question of only a few years when it will put them to rout entirely. Not impossibly the sycophantic culture represented by Tarkington will have a brief resurgence, but if so it will be a revival forced under fascist guns and splinted by fascist bayonets. History and life are on the side of the proletariat and the victory of the democratic tradition in culture is therefore as sure as is the burial of the bourgeois tradition of cultural flunkeyism in the pit which class cravenness has dug for it already. MURRAY GODWIN.

# *History-Making Plays*

*THREE PLAYS, by Clifford Odets. Covici Friede. $2.50.*

THE first performance of *Waiting for Lefty* on Jan. 5, 1935, was an event of major importance in the American theatre. The play was greeted with electric enthusiasm; it has aroused similar enthusiasm wherever it has been produced. Perhaps the most eloquent criticism of *Lefty* has been offered by the police of half a dozen cities, who have shown their appreciation of the play's militant power by trying desperately to suppress it.

Odets has been deluged with praise. Broadway critics, who deal only in blurbs and brickbats, have crowned him with their choicest adjectives. He "has the stuff," "hat-tossing and congratulations," "sweeping vigorous power," "a triumph," "qualities of a dramatic machine-gun." One can agree with a large part of this generous praise—and at the same time point out that it is so indiscriminate as to be practically meaningless, because it tells us nothing about the playwright's special abilities and problems and his relation to the drama of his period.

A reading of these plays confirms and strengthens the impression received in seeing them: here is a talent of outstanding significance, a skill, vitality and honesty rarely found in the current theatre. For this very reason, Odets deserves more than indiscriminate applause; work of this quality requires and demands rigorous critical analysis. Such an analysis must of course be based on standards which are more fundamental than those customarily used in journalistic criticism. These standards involve a certain amount of preliminary discussion and definition which cannot be included within the limits of a brief review. The present review is based on an extensive inquiry into the problems of theatre technique, and attempts a rigorous appraisa of Odets' work in relation to these problems

In the first place, Odets is closely identifie with the working-class movement. This i the most essential aspect of his work, the basi of his method, the key to his development The more liberal critics recognize the vitality of the left-wing theatre; they explain this as being due to the unthinking fervor of its adherents. The radical drama, says Brooks Atkinson, "is enflamed with the crusader's zeal." In another article, he remarks of *Waiting for Lefty*: "The thinking, being identical with the cause, is no test of Mr. Odets' independence of mind."

In a word, the revolutionary writer is "dynamic" because his emotion is canalized, he accepts certain simple "ethical imperatives." The same thought is expressed by John Chamberlain and others. However friendly these opinions may be in intention, they are a serious distortion of the Marxist approach, which has no use for blind zeal, and which aims, not to narrow, but to greatly broaden the cultural horizon.

The playwright (like the artist in other fields) deals with objective reality within the range of his knowledge and experience. The emotional validity of his work depends on the honesty, clarity, depth of his understanding. This is essential in considerin Odets, because it is the clarity of his soci perceptions which makes his work so rich promising. But his understanding of his m terial is, as yet, insufficiently clear: his mc

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emotional and highly-colored passages are often those which are most unsound dramatically: for example, the lyric escape of the lover at the end of *Awake and Sing* and the call to strike at the close of *Waiting for Lefty*. These are climactic scenes in which the action reaches its highest point of tension and solution. The weakness of these scenes indicates a structural flaw in both plays.

In the first act of *Awake and Sing* the social maladjustments of each character are indicated by a wealth of detail in regard to the character's background. Much of this is humorous, relating to minor feelings and complaints: this conveys a sense of oblique half-realized emotional protest. For instance, Ralph says: "All my life I want a pair of black and white shoes and can't get them. It's crazy!" Abrupt contrasts of ideas are used effectively: Jacob: "By money men the interests must be protected. Who gave you such a rotten haircut?"

None of this material is extraneous. It enables Odets to give a thoroughly documented picture of character in relation to environment. He shows us the fears and needs and pressures which underly emotion. But having exposed the roots of action (in the first act of *Awake and Sing*) he leaves his people exactly where he found them—in a state of suspended animation. He fails to develop the action to a higher stage.

The plot revolves around two pivotal events: old Jacob's suicide and Hennie's running away with the man she loves. These events have no organic connection with each other. What is their connection with the theme as a whole?

In some occult way, it is *assumed* that the grandfather's suicide gives Ralph new courage and understanding. In the final act, Ralph says: "I grew up these last few weeks." But how has he grown? His growth is not dramatized in any specific conflict. He faces two problems (which have existed in just the same form throughout the play): his relationship with his mother and with the girl he loves. How does he solve these questions? He remains in the house and gives up the girl, simply telling her that everything is different. Hennie's struggle against her mother's domination, her relationship with her husband, her love for Moe, are not developed dramatically. She seems to take no responsibility for the sinful deceit of marrying a man whom she does not love and deceiving him in regard to the child. She simply ignores this problem, as if that she has any part in it. Her last lines to her husband (in the final act) are curiously insensitive: "I love you . . . I mean it." Sam replies: "I would die for you . . ." and leaves. It is clear that Hennie is trying to comfort him; but the sentiment of these two lines is false, closing a situation which is meaningless because it has never been faced. Her relationship with Moe is also unclear, based on no logical progression. Why does she decide to run away with him at this point? Has anything happened to make her understand him or herself better? What separated her from Moe in the first act? She explains this as being due to her "pride." Are we to believe that this pride (which itself is never dramatized or made factual) is stronger than the sexual and economic pressure which would drive her to Moe the moment she realized she was to have a child by him. Certainly other factors might have prevented this, but these factors must be grounded in social realities, not based upon an "abstract" sentiment.

Thus there is a curious contradiction: the background and the details of character are unsparingly real. But the development is blurred; the solution is sex-mysticism. The departure of the lovers is not an act of will, but an act of faith. It is not conflict, but a denial of conflict.

In *Waiting for Lefty*, Odets has made a tremendous advance. Here there are no overtones of unresolved mysticism. But can it be said that he has solved the structural fault, the lack of progression, which mars the previous play? On the contrary, he has created a device which makes structural development to some extent unnecessary. There can be no question that the device is admirably suited to the needs of the play. But there can also be no question that the unity thus achieved is superficial. Each scene crystallizes a moment of sharp protest, of crucial social anger. But the arrangement of the scenes is somewhat fortuitous. The first scene, Joe and Edna, may be regarded as the most significant, because it concerns the fundamental problem of the worker's family, food and clothes for his children. The third episode (the young hackie and his girl) is also basic. The later scenes (the young actor and the interne) are of a more special character, *less* closely related to the workers' struggle. The emotional tension mounts as the play proceeds: this intensity does *not* spring from the action, but from the increasingly explicit statement of revolutionary protest, which therefore tends to be romantic rather than logical, sloganized rather than growing out of the deepest needs of the characters. The stenographer says: "Come out into the light, Comrade." Dr. Barnes says: "When you fire the first shot say, 'This one's for old Doc Barnes!'" This is exciting, so exciting that it is impossible, at the time, to stop and analyze it. One is swept along, swept by Agate's call to action at the end, "Stormbirds of the working class." But the development which leads to this speech is not cumulatively logical, not based on flesh-and-blood realities.

It is true that the depression has forced many technicians, actors, doctors to become taxi-drivers. But here we have a militant strike committee made up largely of declassed members of the middle class. One cannot reasonably call these people "Stormbirds of the working class."

One thing shows that the author is aware of this problem and is feeling for a solution of it. The key to the problem lies in the incident which breaks Agate's final speech—the flash of news that Lefty has been found "behind the car barns with a bullet in his head." Thus the title of the play is a stroke of genius, indicating Odets' instinctive flare for dramatic truth. It suggests the *need* for a deep unity which is merely hinted at in the action. Lefty's death is unprepared, undramatized. Yet it seems to be the culmination of a series of relationships which are the core of the action, the essence of the deep-going social conflicts around which the play is organized.

*Lefty* is smashingly effective without this fundamental progression. *Till the Day I Die* is a different matter: here the playwright projects a personal conflict. Ernst Taussig's struggle with his environment is not a moment of protest; it is a long agony, in which his revolutionary will is strained to the breaking point. The choice of this theme is significant, showing Odets' progress. But he fails to develop the theme fully. He gives us a compact picture of the vastly complex background of Nazi Germany. With great clarity, he shows us brief flashes of individuals. The


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method is the same as in *Awake and Sing,* the emphasis on small fears, hopes, memories. In first scene Baum says: "I used to be a ceful man who planted tulips." Tilly aks of her girlhood. "In summer I ate lberries from our own trees. In late sum- r the ground was rotten where they fell." 3ut the figure of Ernst Taussig is pale ainst the background of minor characters l startling scenes. The first four scenes al with the capture and torture of Ernst. In the fourth scene, the Major tells him of the horrible plan to make his friends think he is a stool pigeon. The fifth scene deals with his return to Tilly and the melodramatic incident of the detectives breaking in. The sixth scene shows a Communist meeting at which it is decided to blacklist Ernst. In the seventh scene, he returns to Tilly, broken in body and mind, and kills himself. Thus the sustained conflict, the conscious will of man pitted against terrible odds, is omitted. We see him only *before* and *after*. The crucial stage, in which his will is tested and broken, occurs between **scenes five and seven.**

One of the most moving moments in the play is that in the sixth scene: the vote is taken, Tilly raises her hand, agreeing with the others to make an outcast, a traitor, of the man she loves. But here too the playwright fails to dramatize a *progressive* struggle, which gives meaning to Tilly's decision. We do not see the conflict of will which leads to the raising of her hand. We know she believes in his innocence, but we do not see this belief tested, opposed to her party-loyalty, assailed by doubts. Therefore the raising of the hand is not really a decision, but a gesture.

Odets remains more of a *scenewright* than a playwright. In the creation of scenes he is unequalled in the modern theatre. One more example: the unforgettable portrait of the liberal Major, his struggle with his subordinate and his suicide, in scene four of *Till the Day I Die.* But here again he dramatizes a moment of maximum maladjustment, the quick breaking of an unbearable strain.

The problem is a fundamental one, which no revolutionary writer has fully solved: the psychological activity of the individual in relation to the forces which are remolding society. In *Stevedore,* for instance, broad social forces are stressed but psychological conflict is minimized. Odets succeeds in dramatizing the complex inter-action of character and environment—but only in brief snatches. The next step is to master the sustained activity of the human will in conflict with the total environment. Odets' understanding of his material has not yet progressed to this point. His concept of social change is still somewhat romantic; it is seen as a sort of personal regeneration. Thus he perceives the moment of explosive anger, of realization and conversion. Indeed *Waiting for Lefty* is a study in conversions. This is the source of its power. But Odets will undoubtedly go beyond this to mastery of more profound and more sustained conflict.

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON.

## *Meet the Soviet Citizen*

*SOVIET JOURNEY, by Louis Fischer. Harrison Smith and Robert Haas. $2.50.*

IN *Soviet Journey* Mr. Fischer has achieved the well-nigh impossible task of viewing Soviet Russia with the freshness and receptive mind of a tourist, yet with the insight and penetration that can only come after years of experience in the Soviet Union. It is an intensely human book, sketching briefly the myriad-sided aspects of Soviet life with a vividness and sympathy born of a deep understanding of the Russian people and yet retaining an outlook that is thoroughly American.

Mr. Fischer tells us only what he has seen with his own eyes, and what anyone can and would see if he took a corresponding journey. He takes us into a Soviet factory. We interview workers on the job, inquire regarding their wages, experience, educational and cultural opportunities. We watch workers playing volley-ball and "gorodki" between shifts, and consult the librarian regarding the number and kind of books which are taken out of the factory library. (The Putilov factory library contains 93,000 volumes—30,000 on technical subjects, 30,000 political and 33,000 fiction. In addition to these the library contains more than 20,000 volumes for engineers on advanced scientific subjects.)

We pay a visit to the workers' apartments, including the temporary barracks which have been built to house the surplus which cannot be accommodated in the new cooperatives. Then we drive to another section of the city where we find former villas which have been converted into rest homes and sanitoria for the workingmen of the city. Here, as elsewhere, we interview the workers and find them eager to share with us the pleasures of their period of rest.

In this inquisitive frame of mind, we follow Mr. Fischer as he moves around the country. As tourists we see the things that tourists see, but we meet people and penetrate sanctums that would be closed to the ordinary sightseer. In Leningrad, we visit the ancient palaces, symbolizing the luxury-loving life of the Czars and the exploitation from which they derived their riches. In Moscow, we drop into the court of marriage and divorce and the Museum for the Care of Mother and Child, where we discuss the Soviet approach to the problems of love, sex and children. We mingle with the happy throngs at the Park of Culture and Rest. Here we find recreational facilities to suit every taste, everything, in fact, from parachute jumping to information regarding the Japanese mandated islands. At Zaporozhie there is the great new Dnieper Dam where a girl student, who three years before had been an unskilled worker, is one of the three persons in whose hands lie the control of 800,000 horse-power of electrical energy. At Rostov, we engage in a lively discussion with a local editor regarding the nature of freedom in a Communist state, and see first-hand evidence of the brilliant work done by the Politodel in winning the peasant support to the Kremlin's agricultural policy. From thence to Mineral Waters, Kislovodsk and Nalchik in the Caucasus mountains — the modern Tower of Babel—where the Bolsheviks have turned the clock forward twenty centuries in less than fifteen years. We talk to Betal Kalmikov, Communist leader of Kabardino-Balkaria, who tells us of the project already under way for rehousing of the entire population of the district. Over

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the Georgian military highway to Tiflis, Erivan, Batum and, finally, Odessa and Kiev —cities where the tempo of the revolution has been less strenuous.

We have travelled far, but *Soviet Journey* is not a travel book. The geographical, racial and cultural differences which we have encountered are distinctly secondary. What really matters is the job which is being done, the building of socialism and the birth of a new type of human being. We have encountered people from one end of the country to the other—workers, priests, teachers, engineers, peasant women, school children and Party leaders. Some of these individuals, particularly the old intelligensia, are not as well off from a material standpoint as they were before the Revolution, but almost without exception they will tell of the intellectual, cultural and social gains which give a meaning and zest to life which was wholly lacking in the earlier period.

There is, for example, the old judge at Zaporozhie, who had been a judge under the old regime as had his father before him:

"What I enjoy most," he affirmed, "is that I am no longer lonesome . . . I feel intellectual exhilaration . . . that I am a part of a big rich social whole. I am necessary. I am living not only for myself."

His wife added:

"Formerly, we ate well, we slept well, we took care of ourselves, and that was all. [Now] it is exciting to live."

An old woman in Kabardino-Balkaria tells of her reaction to the collective movement:

"When they started talking about the new life I was afraid and did not permit my children to join. We old ones thought that the new life was only for the young, that our children would desert us and we would starve. . . . In the beginning when the kolhoz was organized, my two sons refused to rise when I woke them. Now I rouse them at the break of day and we jump up immediately. We all work together because we are living better."

But the picture which Mr. Fischer draws is not solely one of achievement and progress. There are many problems and failures, and the author is frankly skeptical regarding certain of the Bolshevik axioms. He is especially distressed by what he believes to be a tendency toward a growing inequality of privileges. Granting this to be true, he nevertheless feels that the Communists will cope with this situation before it weakens the social fabric. A more damaging criticism is that the trade unions have become insufficiently militant to protect the workers' interests. It does not appear to occur to Mr. Fischer that the apparent supineness of the unions may merely be a reflection of the fact that the workers are essentially satisfied with the important privileges which they now enjoy. It is on the question of women, however, that Fischer makes the broadest and most questionable generalization. The failure of women to attain political or even cultural prominence in the Soviet Union, despite the favoritism shown them, he says, "establishes a presumption of inferiority." We take it that Mr. Fischer will spend the rest of his life justifying or explaining that statement.

Whatever flaws one may find in Mr. Fischer's ideology fortunately does not interfere seriously with his skill and accuracy as a reporter. *Soviet Journey* may not present a wholly rounded or complete picture of the Soviet Union (no one has done that), but it does something else which is perhaps even more important in these days of violent anti-Soviet propaganda. It introduces us to the new Soviet citizen, a likeable, sociable and an extremely human individual, who is actively absorbed in building a new world.

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## *New Issue of Art Front*

*ART FRONT: Official organ of the Artists Union, 60 West 15th St., N. Y. C.*

THE July issue of Art Front features the devious doings of Jonas Lie, local Hearst of the art world. Adolf Dehn contributes the cover drawing, an effective satire on the Municipal Art Commission in session (you can tell that it's a good painting by the disgust in the officials' faces). Stuart Davis presents a thorough and detailed account of the Shahn-Bloch mural case (NEW MASSES, June 11,) completely exposing Lie's reactionary record and vicious character. Davis' suggestion that Lie be removed and a truly representative-of-artists Art Commission be elected, should be taken up and carried into effect by all who are concerned with the welfare of art and artists in this country.

One of the most important developments in the Union's history to date is its application for an A. F. of L. charter. The advantages and problems of A. F. of L. membership are fully and clearly considered in an article by Phil Bard, president of the Union, urging affiliation and wider organization of all artists.

Lincoln Kirstein contributes a valuable analysis of Grant Wood's work, particularly as regards the derivation of his technique, and points out significant parallels to Wood in Will Rogers, Phil Stong and Norman Rockwell. I feel, however, that Kirstein, in his perhaps-too-ample generosity toward the artist, has rather underestimated the positively reactionary tendencies that Wood manifests and fails adequately to emphasize the potential dangers inherent in his art.

Ethel Olenikov's excellent biographical sketch of Bob Minor, apropos of the Gallup kidnaping, reveals to those not already familiar with his career, the unceasing, militant fight of this foremost revolutionary artist, and should be an inspiration to our artists of what devotion to working class ideals may mean.

Jean Lurçat, internationally-known French modernist, contributes the final half of his article, "The Social Sterility of Painters," begun in the May issue. Although rich in many penetrating insights into the position of the artist today, Lurçat's unfortunate style—highly subjective, elliptical and personal—renders much, if not most of the material inaccessible to the majority of artists in this country; and his bad tendency to generalize in terms of "universal absolutes" vitiates much of the substantial worth of the article. Even though fairly familiar with the material and background to which he refers—the writings and work of the surrealist-anarchist, André Breton, and the history and idiom of the School of Paris—this reviewer found difficulty in following the highly special allusions, personal metaphors and abrupt leaps in thought sequence. But despite these shortcomings, Lurçat reveals to us several important aspects of


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the mentality and position of the French modernists and, by extention and analogy, to the gnawing ble sense of re unable to understand their class position, while blindly struggling against its effects upon them and their art; and the ever-growing realization on the part of others of breaking with the bourgeoisie, on whose fringes they have lived, and aligning themselves with the proletarian revolution. STEPHEN ALEXANDER.

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## A Novel About Automobile Workers

*CONVEYOR, by James Steele. International Publishers. $1.25.*

*CONVEYOR* is the first authentic novel about the life of American automobile workers. What the Henderson report on the auto industry told in cold facts—being thereupon filed in the presidential wastebasket—James Steele has told in terms of character and action, in terms of the pauperization and break-up of a normal, happy working-class family, in terms of a growing understanding on the part of the novel's hero.

Steele knows the auto plant from the inside, having worked in such industrial treadmills for some years himself, and the pictures he draws in terms of human lives of layoff, unemployment, speed-up, company police, stool pigeons, terrorization and other boss weapons make up some fine pages in the American proletarian novel.

Steele understands the complacency of the workers in the era of the full dinner pail, but he also understands that the evils of the depression and the crimes of the N.R.A. existed in embryo even before the crash of 1929, that they are of the very essence of capitalism today. He understands that workers, as yet politically unborn, will nevertheless revolt when driven and goaded to desperation; but he also knows that this revolt must be channeled into purposeful organization if it is to be effective.

On the negative side, it must be admitted that there is a certain thinness in the novel's texture, a lack of clarity in the time sense; a failure to correlate the cancer in the automobile industry with the general sickness of the nation. Above all, the novel is weakest where it should be most strong, politically and organizationally. This does not mean that Steele should have stated explicitly: join the union or join the Communist Party. But it does mean that a novel like *Conveyor*, to be entirely successful, should have made such resolutions so implicit in the very living stuff of its story as to be inescapable on the part of the auto worker reading the book.

As it is, the reader is apt to be much more moved by scenes of the hero's home life or his waiting in line all night for a job only to be slugged in the morning for his pains, than by his eventually being brought around to the office of the Auto Workers' Union. This last detail, which should be climactic and driven home with all the emotional force of the entire story behind it, is treated so slightly as to make almost no impression. There is room—and urgent necessity—for a *Germinal* of all our basic industries and it is a pretty safe bet that those proletarian novels will be most successful *as literature* which most closely and most passionately come to grips with the whole political problem of revolutionary tation and organization.

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# The Dance

## *Finale to a Brilliant Season*

DURING the past year no other left-wing artists have done more exciting work than the New Dance League, which wound up its season's activity in an all-day Festival on June 9.

One should preface comment on such an event with some sketch of the season as a whole—and a warm pleasure it would be to reminisce about the first recital of Revolutionary Solo Dances (Nov. 25), the All-Men Dance program (May 4), the handful of New Theatre-New Dance League Sunday night recitals. But nobody easily forgets such occasions, or the historic evening of Feb. 17 at the Center Theatre when our dancers performed before the largest dance audience ever assembled in this country. The impact of these events on the "general dance public" appears in the ever-increasing audiences that support the New Dance League.

The Festival began with an afternoon competition of seven "amateur" groups, the winner to appear in the evening program. Exactly what "amateur" designated this reviewer hasn't found out, for in terms of fresh feeling and technical finish the amateurs of the afternoons sometimes surpassed the professionals of the evening. "Two Variations" by the State Unit of Dance, Music and Drama (C. W. A. Project) is a ready example: beautifully designed, colored with irony and executed with ease. If its picture of genuine lamentation (part 2) had been as emotionally true as its mockery of lip-service mourning (part 1) this dance would have commanded the prize. As it happened the Blanche Evans Amateurs won the award with "Unite Against War and Fascism." There can be little doubt that this was one of the least distinguished items on the program—mechanical, uninteresting, flat. The judges would have done better had they made no award since "Unite. . . " can add nothing the glory of the New Dance League or to the American League Against War and Fascism, for whose benefit the Festival was held.

In this reviewer's opinion the "Dance of Death" by the Matons Experimental group would have been a logical prize-winner judged according to New Dance League standards. In a series of short episodes, alternating mockery, horror and grim humor, this "revolutionary ballet" communicates a powerful anti-war message. It has very little of the glib frenzy and irritating choppiness that mar the other works by this group. Some judicious cutting and sharpening of the finale could easily make this ballet one of our most stirring dances. The Matons group performed two other numbers, ("Lynch," "Ivory Tower") both new compositions and both spilling over with ideas waiting to be marshalled into clear, persuasive forms. No comment on the afternoon program could fail to mention the "Folk Dances" by the Junior Red Dancers, which were delicious, naïve and gay.

In addition to three new numbers—one of which is something of a landmark in the contemporary dance—the evening program included several works already famous though less than a year old. We have spoken before in these columns of the warmth and fresh feeling in two Tamiris group numbers ("Camaraderie," "Work and Play"), of the superb rhythmic beauty of "Studies in Conflict" and the magnificent comedy of "Traditions," both designed by Charles Weidman and danced by Weidman, Limon, Matons and group. This latter study of the difficulties of substituting new traditions for old has already been hailed by some critics as a masterpiece of abundant, annihilating revolutionary humor; and the thunderous applause it received at the Festival was proof that the audience agreed.

Far less resounding was the applause for "Ah Peace" and "Strike," two new works by the New Dance and the Ruth Allerhand groups respectively. One expected more than a flash of boisterous anti-war wit from the New Dance Group which won last year's festival with "Van der Lubbe's Head"; and such a weak and outmoded composition as "Strike" no longer evokes more than patient indulgence from New Dance League audiences. But these disappointments are pushed out of mind by the overwhelming power of "Strange American Funeral," presented for the first time by the Dance Unit. Using Michael Gold's poem as her text and Elie Siegmeister's piano-voice duet as her score, Anna Sokolow has attempted to dance the story of Jan Clepak, Pennsylvania steel worker. To communicate the moving tragedy by means of a triple fusion of poem, song and dance is, to put it mildly, a prodigious problem; and the degree of success to which Anna Sokolow has solved it constitutes one of the brilliant achievements of the revolutionary dance. To be sure some passages do not shine with full clarity and there is not yet an entirely perfect coordination of words, music and movement; but these flaws are lost in dynamic patterns of such emotional power as to drive the audience into prolonged cheers, whistles and applause. "Strange American Funeral" has not a single fuzzy or uninteresting figure, not a single trick of mere facility, but clean and brilliant designs flowing together along a line of rising intensity until it achieves a summit of militancy and accusing power.

Such a work of imagination, which builds out of subtle suggestion as well as direct statement, shows how far the revolutionary dance has progressed toward full development. There is no longer the notion of limiting it to basic black-and-white posters and trying to dress them in pleasing variations. From this year's work of the New Dance League we see how many-colored and vigorously original the revolutionary dance can be while retaining—indeed usually strengthening—its communicative power. Art, to be original, need not be obscure; for originality by no means involves tortuousness and hypersophistication as we have been led to accept by the involuted forms grown fungus-like on the stumps of a decaying social order. Art can be startlingly fresh, original, new and yet remain as clear, as memorable, as persuasive as a Negro work-song.

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# The Screen

## *Movies in Motley*

AFTER one ghastly rash of green and orange "extravaganzas" four and five years ago, followed by the rounding out of the process itself, followed a year later by Walt Disney's only partial utilization of it in his Silly Symphonies, followed by the complete snubbing of it for two years by Hollywood's feature producers, the honest to God all-color film, with the release of *Becky Sharp,* gave promise at long last of attaching a new and logical member to the anatomy of the one capitalist-developed art. It can scarcely be trumpeted, with the picture's press agents, that an artistic upheaval momentous and decisive as that of the clangent *Jazz Singer* was wrought by the Thackeray novel overnight and single-handed. It must be conceded, however — granting the devil his all too infrequent due—that as an exercise, signal if not wholly virgin, in what might be termed movie "still life," it sets a ndard of purely pictorial excellence way ad of its horrific analogy in the primi- "squawkie."

There are reasons for this, and integral as y are with the rather queer circumstances ler which the picture was made, both will r listing. Old-line Hollywood heads did produce this picture. Hollywood, quite reverse, turned a deaf, if a treasurer's, to the whole noisome idea. One might n say that the chief providers of what--public-wants felt no need at all of en- ing their art. Thirty percent more ex- sive in film cost alone, enmeshed in all ts of strange and fearsome problems, color l proven itself a headache once already; roved now, and inevitable as they might ow it in their heart of hearts, it was a ury still and were best "not thought on." he fine old-line Hollywood heads therewith g themselves into the Malibu sand—and ed against hope.

They reckoned, however, without the art-loving Whitneys. Progeny of a clan who had always mixed business with pleasure—on the sound basis that both should make money (self-supporting horses like Twenty Grand, for example), the Whitney children, "Sonny" and "Jock," had been trained from birth upwards in riding a hobby. Without completely supplanting the horse, to be sure, their fondness for flying had already helped to build Pan-American Airways into a multi-million dollar bonanza. When a few of their ex-theatre cronies—sun-kissed by then—held forth with fervor on the surety of color's becoming the next cinema revolution, they could almost afford to risk a few million inflated dollars for the sake of Art to the masses.

Rank amateurs in the business (if gamblers of mettle), at the outset they shoved down the odds with a noteworthy skill. They did not rest with founding Pioneer Pictures, dedicated to technicolored productions. They went in and bought up a sizeable hunk of Technicolor itself. "For"—they must have reasoned in their fumbling way—"technicolor is, after all, the commodity with the bloated percentage; Technicolor, Incorporated, controls the new patented three-component-colored film, the rights to process it, the basic directions; and finally, to put it a bit bluntly, should the aforementioned revolution catch on, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America—in a meekly submissive body—become technicolored vassals."

And having thus vanquished the foe, like the munition men, by the simple expedient of merging with them, they were ready to provoke a war. *Becky Sharp* was the episode at Sarajevo.

For the general public (to adapt the metaphor slightly), it was of course, the recruiting poster. And in this matter, it can now be perceived, the untutored Whitneys were a lot more clairvoyant than their more mellow prognosticators. Forseeing, as their cronies didn't, that the spectrum as a cinema innovation, was substantially less devastating than the amplified human larynx, they took pains to put *their* revolution across with a job just a trifle more suave than the erstwhile sponsors of Al Jolson as cantor. For Samson Raphaelson, accordingly, they substituted W. M. Thackeray; more important by far, for Director Alan Crosland, they picked Colorist (and superb scenic artist) Robert Edmond Jones. Their whole "credit-panel," to become exhaustive, presaged Art to the Hilt. Kenneth MacGowan, their supervisor, was no venal ogre like most of his ilk but the ex-Isaiah of the Little Theatre Movement. And who, I ask you, would dream of accusing Regisseur Rouben Mamoulian, onetime Theatre Guild genius and stout Hollywood pillar of montage and fine composition, of having ever made money?

And Art it was! Theatrical art, to be sure (but after all isn't that the tradition of cinematic revolutions?) and, one is compelled to add, rather *stagey* theatrical art. Such is our confidence in the Whitney omniscience, however, that we believe this to have been intentional also. For had they been so foolhardy as to project for their first attempt a *real* movie, they would have commissioned a real movie *script.* Even *Vanity Fair* in the hands of a gifted scenarist might have passed muster; but it would have been given dramatic progression, filmic mobility if not action, and something of a powerful climax. (And a faithful *Vanity Fair,* if that were not too silly to hope for, would certainly retain the satiric bite of Thackeray's characterization instead of mulling it down to "whimsical" caricature.) Such, however, was not in the cards (as stacked), and *Becky Sharp* was made instead from an old and bad dramatization.

Its limping episodic structure, its tableaux and virtual processions, its lengthy and sedate conversations were chosen as not unfit means for a prearranged end.

That end (as we have rather belabored, we fear) was to "plug" the "three-component-colored" invention; and in this one respect, it cannot be gainsaid, they have been phenomenally successful. Mechanically, to be sure, there remain a few palpable defects—though, when compared with the painful torture of the childhood of sound, they are mere peccadilloes. And it should be admitted outright that the striving has *not* been for naturalistic coloration but deliberately for ornamental stylization, a frank "illumination," in the mood of medieval parchments —only with animation—of the many-hued pomp of the age's conventions. Within these limits there has been achieved resplendent beauty.

Accessible to the new film process is a vast and gorgeous palette of colors, values both placid and vibrant, even the sheen of fabrics. In their disposition taste has bee displayed, subtlety, and a sureness in the blending of pigments which as scene follows ravishing scene, leaves the eye glutted. The new element is introduced gently; the first scenes contain scarcely no tinting at all. Then the pastels of Becky's boarding-schoo yield to the vivid uniforms and the glittering gowns of the salons; and with the one nearly dramatic scene, at the Duchess of Bedford's ball on the eve of Waterloo, when the distant rumble of Napoleon's cannonading turns the gaiety into a moment of sheer pandemonium, the intense blues, greens and scarlets fleeing frenziedly through a pool of reflected red light ter inextricably into the scene, becoming th elves dramatic. This is without doubt the h point of the film's use of color. It is th real augury of the medium's possible future.

It would be pleasant, course, to feel that all future pigmented ns would be composed of the best that this t scene contains.

Marxists know too much to ld such an illusion. An ordering of public ertissement which depends for its merely technical embellishment on the precarious contradictions of commerce can scarcely promise a high dedication to art. Of what, on the other hand, we can expect in the main, we have once before had too eloquent tokens. The panic for color, like the race for sound, will bring down a scourge on the innocent public of gaudy calendar-art from the hands of the "cheap"—if high salaried—"imitators." The cubic cerebral content thereof, because of color thrown in as a premium, will be cut—if that is still possible—even more.

ALLEN CHUMLEY.

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# Hooray, Etcetera

ROBERT FORSYTHE

HOW it was with you I don't know, but my earliest memories of Fourth of July are inextricably mingled with the picture of a tall, lean man whose Adam's apple bobbed up and down in time with his words and fascinated me. This gentleman was the Congressman from our district. It is inconceivable that all Congressmen were tall and lean and boasted of Adam's apples, but I have only my memory to go on and even though the records show that our representatives in Congress changed much more frequently than one would have believed possible in those days of Republican stability, I must insist on my recollection. Whether all Congressmen fancied they were second Abe Lincolns or the idea was ingrained in my own mind, it is certain beyond a doubt that I still think of them as junior rail-splitters. What they were doing, of course, was making the Fourth of July oration.

I can't remember a word the gentlemen said and I don't believe much attention could have been paid them because in those moments when I could take my gaze away from the Adam's apple, I was joining the other lads in galloping around the bandstand. There was an attempt made to have peace and attention while the great man spoke, but the fathers who held up their infant sons at this fount of patriotic wisdom soon got a pain in the arm and either wandered away or turned the brat back to his mama who would be visiting with the other women near the rear of the crowd. The kids yelled, the next raft of kids almost tore the speakers' stand down with their wild careenings and the young bucks and lassies took advantage of the solemn occasion to disappear in the direction of the pop stand. But the flags were flying, there was generally a baseball game after the speaking and there was always a band and sometimes a parade. In our town the parade never amounted to much because we only had one member of the Grand Army of the Republic and he thought so little of war or the memory of it that he said he'd be damned if he got all dressed up in his uniform and make a show of himself by walking down a dusty road while a lot of people gawked at him. We were also short of Spanish-American veterans and for some reason the Spanish-Americans vets were never popular. People rather held that it was a sorry war at the best and something that nobody had much right to be cocky about. As a consequence, there were years when he had no parade at all. A new Lutheran minister was shocked at this and insisted on taking steps. He got the Spanish-American War vets out but he couldn't budge the G.A.R. gentlemen and the parade rather petered out, with the band coming along bravely enough at the head but the man power soon dwindling and the process ending with the usual grocery wagons, lumber trucks and other commercial vehicles getting in a little advertising plug for their businesses under the guise of patriotism. Next year the minister let the parade go and confined himself to being chairman of the speaking.

We had no paper in our town, even a weekly, and the Fourth of July oration was never preserved for history, but I see now that the speech was an important matter. It is important now as practically the only thing that has come down to us from the old ceremony. There are probably towns where Fourth of July is still celebrated with a parade, bands and fireworks, but they are becoming fewer with the years. People use the Fourth of July holiday now to get away to the beach or to the mountains. Those who can't get away prefer to hang around the house and rest. The others go to ball games or drink a little beer with the neighbors. The actual ceremonies are now confined to an unveiling of a plaque or a short service in the park with the band playing and a few hardy old citizens on hand to hear Congressman Blatz making a speech against Communism. What we have of Fourth of July now, as a result, are the Fifth of July newspaper reports of what the Hon. James E. Beck of Pennsylvania had to say about George Washington. It is hardly likely that the Hon. James will mention Thomas Jefferson or Thomas Paine or Samuel Adams. In Kansas, they will be honoring John Brown in a ceremony as obscene as any mortal man could invent—John Brown the old revolutionary being patted on the head by hypocritical stuffed shirts who would have shot him on sight when he was alive.

The Hon. James E. Beck will be lauding George Washington not as the rebel who defied the King and constituted authority but as George Washington who helped establish the Constitution, which must be upheld against all other men who defy authority when it insists upon being tyranny. What is ironic about the flannel-mouthed orators who bore the populace on the Fourth of July is that they have no one to praise but men they would be turning over to the police if they were alive

INDEPENDENCE DAY *Mackey*

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today. If we are to judge by their present actions, the James E. Becks would have been the Tories of the Revolution. In all the Fourth of July oratory, there is no mention of [illegible] never forgot their [illegible] which entertained [illegible]ral Howe in com[illegible] winter of Valley Forge.

It was a question of the Reds and Whites over again.

Given the slightest opportunity, I could fashion a series of Fourth of July speeches which would really represent the flavor of revolution for which Independence Day stands. But I should probably have as little chance of presenting them as a Negro would have of freedom in the free state of Kansas. I have been hearing some interesting tales about that famous battleground of slavery. The struggle as to whether the new state of Kansas was to be slave or free was a turning point in American history and was not confined to oratory and parliamentary debate. Quantrell's raid against Lawrence, Kansas, was as bloody as anything which followed in the Civil War. The town was leveled and the population massacred. But Kansas was eventually a Free State, a refuge for the fleeing Negro slaves. But the Kansans who now erect a statue to John Brown are so little concerned about the black man for whom John Brown gave up his life that no Negroes are permitted on the athletic teams of the University of Kansas. They are not permitted because it would not be pleasing to the teams from Missouri and Oklahoma. I could, on a moment's notice, write a Fourth of July oration which would deal justly with John Brown and with Kansas, but I very much doubt that Kansas would care for it. And yet all the fine figures of American history are the figures of revolution. The spectacle of the Grass Roots Convention at Springfield calling upon the name of Abraham Lincoln to support them in their stand in defense of the Constitution of the United States would be a source of some ironic delight to the great man himself. He defied the Supreme Court of the United States in the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates on the Dred Scott decision, an action which could be regarded by Hearst now as a form of treason.

I have only one word of advice for the gentlemen who will address the assembled company of the National Guard at the annual Fourth of July celebrations this year: Make no mention of the Declaration of Independence and in no case venture to read portions of it in the presence of the police. It is all very well to commemorate Independence Day but in no case must you give a hint of what it meant to the Founding Fathers. I am afraid they were not only uncouth fellows but hair-brained agitators. They included words in the Declaration of Independence which it would be a great pleasure to hear spoken by such silver-tongued geniuses as the Hon. James E. Beck, the Hon. Frank O. Lowden, the Hon. Matthew Woll, the Hon. Carter Glass, the Hon. Dr. Angell, President of Yale. Such words as

> . . . When a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them (the masses) under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security.

It would be a matter of some interest to the Hon. Dr. Angell, for example, to speak these words from a public platform and find himself, shortly thereafter, being bumped around a station house by a series of gentlemen in blue who would not understand that after all he was simply reciting the tenets upon which this great, free democracy was established.

## Between Ourselves

IN SEEKING exact data as to the class character of our circulation, we have recently been requesting new readers to state their occupations. Out of 135 answers given in a recent ten-day period, the following picture emerges of the distribution by occupations of these readers of THE NEW MASSES:

Accountants, 3; artists, 3; bookkeepers, 2; bankers, 1; businessmen, 8; barbers, 1; clerks, 4; dentists, 6; doctors, 9; druggists, 1; draftsmen, 1; electricians, 3; engineers, 3; farmers, 1; hotel workers, 1; housewives, 8; janitors, 1; lawyers, 7; librarians, 3; musicians, 1; motion picture operators, 2; nurses, 1; office workers, 2; pharmacists, 2; plumbers, 3; psychiatrists, 1; printers, 3; salesmen, 6; secretaries, 6; social workers, 5; students, 12; teachers, 16; university instructors, 3; writers, 7.

The totals are: industrial or agrarian workers, 24; white-collar workers, 14; professional and business people, 97.

The editorial in this issue, "The Crisis of the Middle Class," is available, slightly expanded, in leaflet form and readers wishing copies for distribution to their friends may have them free by writing in.

Clifford Odets, author of *Waiting for Lefty*, is one of the delegation of American workers and intellectuals leaving for Cuba June 29 on the S.S. Oriente to investigate conditions on the island. Prisons will be inspected, famous Realengo 18—the first Soviet in America—will be visited and the role of the American ambassador in the internal affairs on the island will be investigated. Odets, who goes as the delegate from the League of American Writers, will describe what he sees in Cuba for THE NEW MASSES.

Loren Miller is in St. Louis at the convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and will report the event in a future issue, probably next week.

### New Masses Lectures

Sunday, June 30—Benjamin Goldstein, "Birobidjan or Palestine?", at 3200 Coney Island Avenue, Brooklyn. Auspices: Schule 101, IWO.

Sunday, June 30—James Casey, "Role of the Press," Scandinavian Workers Home, 222 Community Lane, Annadale, Staten Island.

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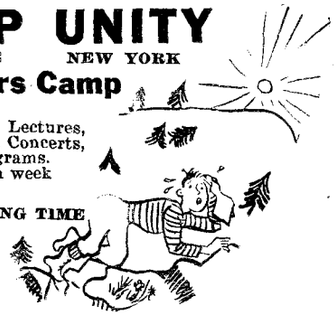

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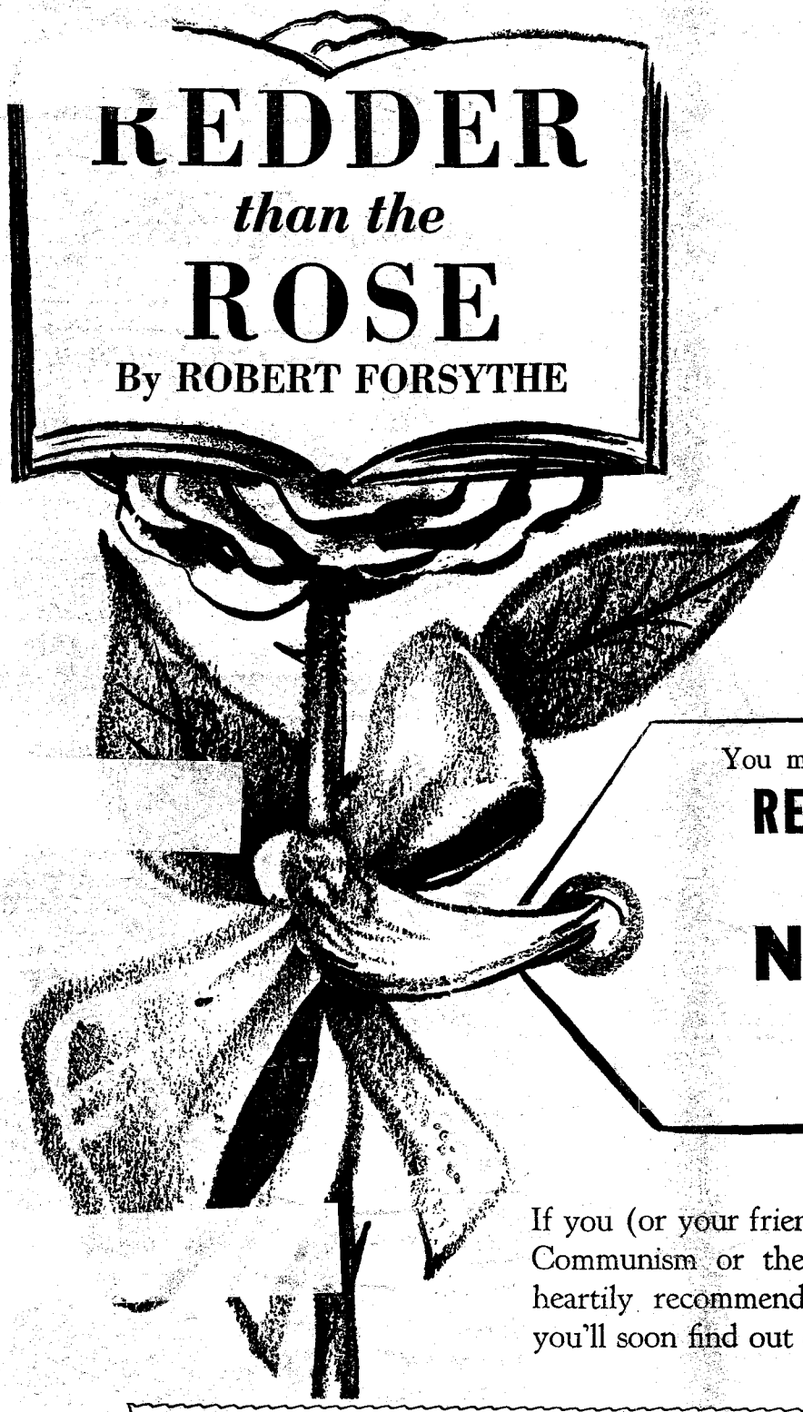


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